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# LIFE AND LIFE-WORK

OF

# MOTHER THEODORE GUÉRIN,

FOUNDRESS OF THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE
AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS,
VIGO COUNTY, INDIANA.

BY A MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION.

*She glorified her nobility by being conversant with God; yea, and the Lord of all things hath loved her.*—Wisd. viii. 3.

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✝ JOHN M. FARLEY,
*Archbishop of New York.*

NEW YORK, March 26, 1904.

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*To*

**Mary Immaculate,**

*Mother of the Word Incarnate*

*and*

*Our Mother,*

*In Filial Devotion*

*and*

*In Grateful Remembrance*

*Of the Mercies of Her Divine Son,*

*Granted in*

*The Providence of His Sacred Heart,*

*This Volume Is Humbly*

*Dedicated.*

## TO THE SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE.

From Rev. Charles Coppens, S.J.

Rev. dear Mother Superior:

I am indeed very much pleased to learn from your welcome letter that the life of your venerated Foundress is at last to be published. It will do incalculable good for the glory of God and the salvation and perfection of countless souls.

One of the good, the excellent features of this whole book is the solidity of its doctrine. . . . As to the book, the more I read it the more I admire your venerable Foundress. It shows her to have been a very superior woman, both in natural gifts and in supernatural virtues. She lived a life of extraordinary union with God and conformity to His holy will; and she practised these virtues under the most difficult circumstances, where they required heroic faith, hope, and charity.

Her wisdom in governing is a fit model for all persons in authority. In a word, the volume when published will be a very precious addition to our sacred literature, exhibiting, as it does, a perfect model of consummate virtue for all classes of the faithful, but especially for religious men and women. Her letters are most precious; I should not like to see any of them omitted.

I hope you will have this excellent work printed without further delay. I thank God that I have been permitted to read it; and I will consider it a great blessing if He allow me to be instrumental in having it published for general edification.

Creighton University, Omaha, Neb.,
November, 1903.

# WRITER'S PREFACE.

To the Sisters of Providence at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods the life of the holy and revered Mother Foundress comes as an answer to long yearning and fervent prayer.

To the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir—if the sword of persecution has not driven them from the cradle-home of the Congregation—this volume will be likewise acceptable, chronicling, as it does, the virtues and life-work of one of their own members. When Ruillé gave to Indiana its pioneer Religious under the leadership of Mother Theodore, it was not unconscious of its sacrifice; but the greater glory of God rose above every personal consideration.

To brides of Christ in other portions of the Lord's vineyard, the life here presented will prove interesting, it is hoped, the principles of the religious state being the same always—the basis must be Gospel precept no matter what the form of application.

And to devout readers in general who appreciate the dignity of a religious vocation, these aspects of a cloistral life will undoubtedly open up new vistas of the beauty of the faith which exhibits in marvellous plan the wonderful, worshipful ways of the providence of

God; and if only one heart is quickened to a reverent confidence in that loving Providence, to a recognition of Its claims upon our homage and adoration, the object of this task will have been attained.

Grateful acknowledgments are here made to those who have assisted in bringing the work to completion, either by aiding materially or by giving their kind encouragement. Especially to be mentioned are Rev. Charles Coppens, S.J.; Rev. Walter Hill, S.J.; Rev. James McGovern, D.D., and Rev. Joseph Chartrand.

The writer declares her submission to holy Church in all its teachings, and assigns to the words "saint," "blessed," and the like no other meaning than that which is authorized by the Holy Apostolic See.

St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, Feb. 2, 1904.

# PREFACE.

THE life of Mother Theodore Guérin is another record of the *gesta Dei per Francos*. The French people have received from God remarkable gifts. They have nobly used them. They have been in every age, since they received the gift of the faith, the pioneers of Christian civilization—in Europe, in America, in Asia, in Africa, and in the far-off isles of Oceanica—everywhere bringing the light and benefits of the faith.

America has seen the intrepid sons of France early on her soil and in her wilds, and given up her wonders to a Père Marquette, the explorer of the Mississippi, and other noble sons of the Church, who, not through greed of lucre but through a love of souls, gave themselves and their worldly belongings to spread the light of Christianity among the peoples that sat in the darkness of unbelief.

Mother Theodore was a Religious of the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir. She entered the convent while still in early youth, and was distinguished among her companions for steadiness of purpose and firmness of character that gained for her the confidence of her Superiors.

When Mgr. de la Hailandière was seeking Religious

for the new diocese of Vincennes, recently established under the rule of the saintly Bishop Bruté, as noted for his learning as he was for his piety, he addressed himself to the Superior of the Sisters of Ruillé. Mother Theodore, filled with the spirit of a missioner, responded to the invitation as a call from God. With her were five other Sisters who shared her missionary spirit—Sister Vincent, Sister Basilide, Sister Mary Xavier, Sister Mary Liguori, and Sister Olympiade. The Bishop of Vincennes, however, was called to his reward before they could start for their destination, and some delay was occasioned. Mgr. de la Hailandière was appointed his successor, and when he was ready to start for his See, he left with the promise that Sisters from Ruillé would make a foundation in his diocese. One year later six Sisters of Providence left their sunny France for the woods of Indiana, embarking on their long journey of four thousand miles, which then required more weeks of travel than it now requires days. The incidents of this journey will be told in the work.

The Sisters arrived at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods the twenty-second of October, 1840, and immediately began their labors. We leave the details for the present history. The record of their great undertaking is told by the development of the works they carried on. When they entered the diocese there were there only a few Sisters of Charity—of the Community of Emmetsburg. Mother Theodore and her companions carried on their work with energy, self-denial, in poverty and in trust in Providence; and God rewarded them, blessing them in a most singular manner, making their undertakings prosper and their numbers multiply. Mother

Theodore saw the Sisters, during the sixteen years of her residence among them, increase from six to ninety-one, with institutions flourishing and doing great and permanent good. What is it that caused this great increase? It was the blessing of God, for without that her work would have remained sterile. Mother Theodore understood that, and with true humility and strong faith gave the glory to God and besought of Him the needed aid to carry on His work. Her spirit has remained with her spiritual daughters, and as long as it will remain St.-Mary-of-the-Woods will continue to prosper and yield fruit of life eternal.

+ Francis Silas,

Bishop of Indianapolis.

Passion Sunday, 1904.

# INTRODUCTION.

The world possesses an extensive and rich library of spiritual books—doctrinal and ascetic works of great variety, utility, and profundity; but worldliness creating a general disrelish for anything that savors of deep spirituality, hinders spiritual books, so called, from having a wide range of readers. Beyond the professedly devout or religious class there are very few to whom even the titles of such works are familiar.

The century's materialistic notions do not excite an appetite for this wholesome and delicious food of the soul; and unless this food is presented in form acceptable to the undisciplined and restless intellect, it is likely to be entirely rejected.

The possibilities of biography to attract and instruct, make the lives of the Servants of God of inestimable value. An interest is aroused as our own thought or feeling finds echo in the disclosures that reveal to us what others have thought and felt; in the manifestation of power and weakness; of conflict—struggle and victory, or unrighteous condescension and defeat, often so akin to our own experiences as seemingly to be a subjective reality. All this is enticing; and along with

the record of grace triumphant, human nature rising to the sublime heights of moral grandeur, we read convincing tales of our own delinquencies, unmistakable defection, cowardice, or desertion from the high standard of rectitude.

This is wholesome food for heart and mind, and we gratefully welcome each new accession to the long and honorable line of heroes and heroines whose biographies edify us and by happy art draw us on to the appreciation of those better things that made their lives exemplars and incentives.

Sacred literature now receives a valuable contribution in the life of Mother Theodore Guérin, Foundress of the Sisters of Providence at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, Vigo County, Indiana. Little has hitherto been known of her magnificent institution; its early history, therefore, will undoubtedly claim a large number of interested readers.

Apart from the historical value of such a work, it is a most praiseworthy action on the part of the spiritual daughters of their venerated Mother Theodore to have collected and published her letters and sayings. It tells of their loyalty. It tells of their reverence. It tells of their desire to perpetuate her spirit, revealed in her words, her acts, her plans and measures, according as each is here presented. As long as the spirit of an order is maintained, its vital force continues and increases; but when modifications affecting essentials are suffered, when the craft drifts away from the early moorings of self-denying and God-seeking principles, no matter what the apparent expansion may be, disappointing results follow, deterioration, and, finally,

dissolution. When holy traditions lapse into desuetude the written word becomes the only safeguard; this makes the value of a history or a biography apparent.

In no better way can an insight of character be gained than by letters. A large number written by the Mother Foundress are here produced. They are all characteristic, many of them very remarkable. These, with her conferences, constitute an expository of sound doctrine, solid and practical, that may justly be considered a basis for the highest spirituality.

The narrative taken in its entirety reveals to us a woman of uncommon valor, one of those religious athletes whose life and teachings effect a spiritual fecundity that secures vast conquests to Christ and His holy Church. It is a beautiful and forcible setting of those sublime truths that underlie the eternal plan of creation and establish the relationship that should exist between the Sovereign Maker and the creature fashioned by His word; showing clearly how Providence is just and holy in wise dispensation, man often perverse in selfish conceit. It proves that *the arm of the Lord is not shortened;*[1] that *the gift of God abideth with the just, whose advancement shall have success forever.*[2]

It shows the capabilities of strong living faith: *If you have faith,* said the Divine Teacher, *even as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall remove mountains.*[3]

It shows the sustaining powers of resigned hope: *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength;*

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[1] Isaias lix. 1. [2] Ecclus. xi. 17. [3] St. Luke xvii. 6.

*they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*[1]

It shows the garnered fruits of charity—the blessing of the Lord to them that fear Him and *walk worthy of God in all things pleasing.*[2]

And, finally, it shows how *tribulation worketh patience; and patience hope; and hope confoundeth not.*[3]

Every one who pledges himself to the work of saving souls must expect to suffer if his ministry is to be profitable. Multiplied labors are not the greatest rigors. Distress of mind and heart, human weakness, lack of sympathy and support, misunderstandings, to say nothing of the malice of men and the snares of the devil—this is the burden of the apostolate. All seem to know it, yet when it comes to the exercise how few are found with magnanimity of soul enough or with spiritual nerve enough to endure the test! Many there are who are willing to sit with Christ at His table, but few to share His fast; many to behold His glory, few to bear His ignominy. (à Kempis.)

It is in generous acceptance of the cross that strength comes for the warfare; so it is also in self-sacrifice that we discern the halo of holiness—God's presence in His elect.

Sacrifice shorn of its glory, inasmuch as it was scarcely recognized, epitomizes the life of Mother Theodore Guérin. The keynote of her intensely spiritual character is sounded in these lines addressed to the estimable Bishop of Mans: "I consider it the greatest privilege of my life to have suffered something for my

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[1] Isaias xl. 28. [2] Col. i. 10. [3] Romans v. 3.

God." Truly the lesson of Calvary was well understood by this spouse of a crucified King! It must needs be that rich endowment of supernatural favor was her recompense.

This is the age of hidden saints. A bloody persecution may not be sending victors to the eternal courts, but the sword of trial is as sharp as the blade of the executioner; and though a martyr's triumph is not proclaimed from the Church's altar, a martyr's palm is borne by those sequestered Servants of God who now "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

The diocese of Vincennes, now Indianapolis, holds an enviable place in the history of the Catholic Church in America, having been one of the earliest Sees formed in the West and graced by the exalted virtues of its primal Bishop, the sainted Simon Gabriel Bruté, whom but to name is to bless. The transfer of title is no abrogation of dignity, and memory will ever hold dear the associations that cluster around an honored name and a privileged people.

Not the least glory encircling the diocese was its possessing such a magnanimous pioneer Religious as we find Mother Theodore to have been. She was distinctively a diplomat in religious organization, and eminently a teacher. Many are the lessons to be learned from her life; the Religious, the priest, the laity will find them.

Not to anticipate, only two or three gems picked up here and there along the wayside of the narrative are selected for mention. An idea developed with uncommon perspicacity, a teaching promulgated with insistent emphasis was that of personal co-operation

with the grace of God as it is given in general to the members of a body corporate. In her simple but fearless way the Foundress tells her Sisters that in the divine economy all have equal chances, since the Rule they follow is the one great channel through which grace is communicated to their souls. Then comes the startling corollary, that some may be lost eternally through the very means by which others ascend to high perfection. Correspondence with the grace of God distinguishes the saint from the sinner.

Equally salutary is the prudent Foundress's theory that a very busy life requires the strong counterpart of much prayer and deep recollection. A multiplicity of affairs and undisturbed devotion, while not positively incompatible, she says, are, nevertheless, uncongenial conditions. To establish a sympathy between duties in their nature inimical must be the constant aim of all who aspire to a successful career in spirituality.

CHARACTER-FORMING seems to be a special grace or characteristic of the Sisterhood founded by Mother Guérin. The newly initiated, and the veteran alike, are imbued with the principle of devoting themselves to their work as though all depended on human effort, at the same time *casting all their care upon the Lord,*[1] *who governeth all things with number, weight, and measure;*[2] "by prayer and penitence and exercising the spirit" soliciting aid of the Most High, without whose help we cannot say: *The Lord Jesus.*[3]

The great boast of our age, and the great want of our age, leads us to be particularly impressed with the edu-

[1] I. Peter v. 7; Ps. liv. 23. [2] Wisdom xi. 21. [3] I. Cor. xii. 3.

cational views of the Foundress, her schemes and her methods. To pronounced ability she brought the results of great care and diligence; and when were added the fruits of experience, together with that special keenness of perception consequent upon a life of deep union with God, and "exercising the spirit," as St. Peter says, there was laid the foundation of a pedagogy which to-day is neither antiquated nor insufficient. The whole system that makes the order of Providence so successful as an educational institution is attributed, and justly, to the sagacious Mother Foundress, present contingencies developing, not changing, her plans.

It was the high conception she had formed of the dignity of a religious teacher that gave to her life-work the perfection it assumed. To be identified with God's work in the salvation of souls and the betterment of mankind was her holy ambition; she required no other motive for the exercise of her zeal, no other recompense than *to spend and to be spent*.[1]

In deploring the scarcity of vocations to the religious life when the field was so vast and the laborers so few, we observe that the cause she assigned was the same that to-day holds back so many nobly gifted young men and women from responding to the call of the divine Master. Appeal to the religious impulses of nature is hushed by irresistible pleasure-seeking, softness, and love of one's ease, which incapacitate souls for anything approaching the valorous in self-sacrifice; strangers to the arbitrament of virtue, their lives are as aimless as useless.

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[1] II. Cor. xii. 15.

There seems to be a growing tendency of late to acknowledge woman's work in the domain of education. It is a tardy recognition. Honor demands a tribute of gratitude, notably in the case of female Religious in the United States; and the awakening augurs well for the public spirit of discernment and justice. We American Catholics are proud of our country's rapid progress. Let us not forget the power that initiated and developed some of its grandest institutions.

J. Card. Gibbons

# CONTENTS.

PAGE

Preface ..... ix
Introduction ..... xiii

CHAPTER I.

Birth of Mother Theodore.—Étables.—Parentage.—Early Education.—First Holy Communion.—Napoleonic Wars in Spain.—Death of Monsieur Guérin ..... 15

CHAPTER II.

Vocation.—The Secret Discovered.—Madame Guérin's Opposition.—Her Daughter's Interior and Exterior Trials.—Madame Guérin Suddenly Withdraws Her Objections.—The Carmelites.—The Sisters of Providence ..... 33

CHAPTER III.

Origin of the Sisters of Providence.—Abbé Dujarié at Ruillé-sur-Loir.—"Little Providence."—Branch Establishments.—Madame Girouardière's Assistance ..... 43

CHAPTER IV.

Mademoiselle Joséphine Zoé du Roscoät.—Exile of Count Rolland du Roscoät.—Revolt of the Negroes in San Domingo.—The Countess, Madame du Roscoät, Opens a Boarding-school.—The Count's Restoration.—Mademoiselle Joséphine Zoé du Roscoät at Saint-Brieuc.—Aimée Lecor.—Mademoiselle du Roscoät at Ruillé-sur-Loir.—She is Elected First Mother-General.—Her Death at the Château du Roscoät.—Aimée Lecor as Superior-General.. 52

CHAPTER V.

Mademoiselle Guérin at Ruillé-sur-Loir.—Novitiate.—Illness.—She Goes to Pruilly.—Receives the Religious Habit.—Takes

## CHAPTER XVII.

PAGE

New Foundations.—Jasper.—Saint-Francisville.—Saint-Peter's.—1842–1843. . . . . 219

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Trials from Troublesome Subjects.—The Academy Loses Many Pupils Owing to Evil Reports.—New Missions Proposed.—Edifying Incidents. . . . . 236

## CHAPTER XIX.

Fire Destroys the Granary.—Mother Theodore is Refused Credit at the Stores.—The Sisters in Want of Food.—Assistance from France.—Mother Theodore Proposes a Voyage to France.—Bishop de la Hailandière's Letters of Approval.—Father Corbe Appointed Chaplain at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. . . . . 249

## CHAPTER XX.

Mother Theodore Returns to France.—Efforts of Friends in France to Make Her Mission a Success.—Troubles at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods Cause Her to Return to America. . . . . 260

## CHAPTER XXI.

Mother Theodore is Deposed in Her Absence.—Historical Notes.—Bishop de la Hailandière's Early Difficulties. . . . . 274

## CHAPTER XXII.

Continued Trials for the Community.—Letter of Mother Mary to Mother Theodore.—Letters from Sister Basilide and Sister St. Francis Xavier.—Distribution of Prizes at the Academy.—Mother Anastasia Brown.—The Sisters of Providence at Saint-Peter's, Ind. . . . . 284

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Monseigneur Forbin Janson and Mother Theodore.—Her Interview with M. Martin du Nord, Keeper of the Seals.—Audience with King Louis Philippe and Queen Amelia.—The Storm at Sea.—The Ursulines of New Orleans.—St. Ann's Chapel. . . . . 302

## CHAPTER XXIV.

PAGE

Mother Theodore's Joy to be Again in Indiana.—Letter of Mother Mary, Superior-General of Ruillé-sur-Loir.—Letter of Father Corbe.—St.-Mary-of-the-Woods Incorporated by an Act of the Indiana Legislature.—Severe Illness of the Foundress.—Bishop de la Hailandière Returns from Rome. —He Presents Relics to Mother Theodore.—The Sisters Appeal for the Approval of Their Rules..... 318

## CHAPTER XXV.

Measures of Compromise Adopted.—Their Failure.—Mother Theodore is Excommunicated and Dismissed from the Congregation.—Appeal to Archbishop Eccleston, of Baltimore.—Bishop de la Hailandière Resigns..... 340

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Vincennes' New Bishop.—Bishop Bazin Consecrated.—Letters of Bishop Bazin to Mother Theodore.—Bishop Bazin at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.—Death of Bishop Bazin.—Bishop de St. Palais..... 356

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Prosperity of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.—Bishop Martin of Natchitoches Applies for Sisters of Providence.—Mother Theodore's Sorrow at the Death of Sister Mary Liguori Tiercin, Sister Seraphine Carroll, and Sister Mary Joseph Parveillan..... 372

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Rt. Rev. Maurice de St. Palais Confirms Mother Theodore in Her Office of Superior-General.—Father Dupontavice.—Sister St. Francis Xavier, the *Marie Eustelle* of Indiana.—Arrival at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods of Elvire Le Fer de la Motte; (Sister M. Joseph, 2d).—Other Candidates from France.—Sister M. Theodore Joins Her Aunt, the Venerated Foundress, at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.—The Benedictines in Indiana.—The New Mother House of the Sisters of Providence.—Fears and Prayers of the Foundress..... 392

CHAPTER XXIX.

PAGE

Mother Theodore is Persuaded to Assume Charge of the Diocesan Asylum for Boys.—The Cholera in Indiana.—Sister St. Lawrence Falls a Victim.—First Railroad through St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.—Father Corbe's Charity to St. Mary's Village.—Sudden Cure of Sister St. Francis Xavier.—Mother Theodore and Sister St. Francis Miraculously Escape Death by Accident.—Public Commendation of the Institution of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. ..... 409

CHAPTER XXX.

Spiritual Conferences.—Letters of Direction.—Counsels and Admonitions Given by Mother Theodore. ..... 424

CHAPTER XXXI.

The "Fruits of Her Spirit" (*continued*). ..... 442

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Declared an Article of Faith.—Death of Bishop Bouvier in the Quirinal Palace, Rome.—Pius IX. Visits the Dying Bishop.—Mother Theodore Receives the Tidings from Abbé Sébaux. ..... 457

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Mother Theodore's Failing Health.—Her Preservation from Drowning.—Letters to and from Father Gleizal, S.J.—Death of Sister St. Francis Xavier.—Promiscuous Correspondence. ..... 463

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Mother Theodore's Last Illness.—Her Trials and Consolations.—Her Death.—Tributes to Her Memory ..... 483

# LIFE OF MOTHER THEODORE.

## CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF MOTHER THEODORE.—ÉTABLES.—PARENTAGE.—EARLY EDUCATION.—FIRST HOLY COMMUNION.—NAPOLEONIC WARS IN SPAIN.—DEATH OF MONSIEUR GUÉRIN.

Mother Theodore was born at Etables (Côtes-du-Nord), France, October 2, 1798.

At the end of the eighteenth century Étables counted its inhabitants by hundreds rather than thousands; yet the little town had a record of prosperity not to be despised. In close proximity to Portrieux, a seaport to the north, distant only a half hour's walk, and Saint-Brieuc, the capital city of Brittany, not more than five leagues to the south, it possessed advantages that contributed to its thrift without depriving it of the exceptional enjoyment of secluded and simple felicity.

The traffic of the seas engaged a large portion of the wage-earners; the majority, however, found employment in the cultivation and care of their property; for, unlike in our crowded cities, every home had its garden and meadows, the produce of which fur-

nished income sufficient for ordinary needs. Under these conditions, the quiet and comfort of rural environment could be enjoyed without the heavier cares, labors, and isolation of country life.

Of what might be called business, in the usually accepted sense of the term, there was very little; but what there was bore a character of stability that insured the honor of the town and effected the general condition of easy circumstances.

Étables overlooked the sea. The dark frowning rocks rising mountain-like above the shores, or the gentle slopes of blanched sand leading to the water's edge, contrasting with the green hills on the opposite side, created magnificent scenery. The valleys were fertile and well cultivated; the hills were unproductive except of a broom brush that served as fuel; at their bases nestled the cottages, neat and unpretentious, yet having an air of comfort and ease, while here and there a few public buildings and manorial homesteads gave variety to the scene.

The parish church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin under the title of the Immaculate Conception, that prerogative of the Mother of God having been dear to the hearts of the faithful long years before Pius IX. proclaimed the dogma an article of faith. If, as it is said, two-thirds of the cathedrals of France were named in honor of Our Lady's Assumption, the same proportion might be said to exist in the case of the parishes whose title was that of the Virgin Mother, pure and immaculate. The fact is suggestive. What more salutary and effectual than that to the moral declination of the world there should be opposed a

standard, lifting up before the spiritual gaze a model of incomparable beauty, a sinlessness perfect and sublime! The idea was effective and, undoubtedly, became a strong moulding factor in the reputation for high integrity which the people of Brittany enjoyed, a reputation that even to the present day is claimed as one of their most precious heirlooms.

In the humble town of Étables where our interest centres with the closing years of the eighteenth century, though the revolutionary spirit had wrought direful changes, there were still many very good people; and as goodness cannot be circumscribed by cliff or wave, but, like truth, reaches from end to end mightily, so the influence then having birth on Brittany's billow-swept shore has travelled down the aisles of a century, losing never but gaining always by its continuous onward march. To-day's possession is yesterday's legacy, and the present success of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, is, in the order of God's providence, an inheritance from that "land of sunshine and gladness, as of cross and shadow!" Lovingly, then, do we trace the path of divine guidance through diverse developments and countless evolutions, while a deeper interest draws us toward the quaint old town on the coasts of the north, as a result of its part in our narrative.

It would seem inappropriate to urge claims of noble ancestry for one whose spirit was that of humble retirement and renunciation of all worldly honor, whose ambition from her tender youth proved how enamoured she had become of holy poverty, a life of which is a direct though silent attack on the spirit of worldli-

ness, which thrives upon vanities, riches, and preferments. The sublime dignity of a Christian was the only nobility cherished and honored by the holy foundress, although her father and mother were descendants from old and highly distinguished families. The vicissitudes concurrent with dynastic alternations in the old régime, and the political and social disasters attendant upon the various governmental policies, brought reverses to many of the best families of France. In numerous instances, the name perished with lineal pretensions, or, if title still remained, it was often hazardous to claim it, so fierce were political animosities. From this state of affairs there sprang up a class, poor as to estates and moneyed capital, but retaining that impression of respectability and culture that belonged to the upper classes. They were isolated by circumstances, their intellectual superiority keeping them above the masses, and family traditions preventing them from mingling in circles with which there was no social kinship. Among this class were the families to which Laurent Guérin and Isabelle Lefèvre belonged. But their integrity and deep piety placed them in the first rank and compelled the respect that is always virtue's reward; so if it be said of their daughter that she glorified her nobility by being conversant with God, similar praise is merited by Monsieur and Madame Guérin who, by word and example planted the seeds of virtue in the heart of that child destined to reflect great honor on her family and on the Church by the singular holiness of her life.

The Lefèvre family were devoted royalists, while the Guérins were avowed Napoleonites. Laurent Guérin,

therefore, fell into great disfavor with his friends by choosing a wife from the legitimist party; and Madame Guérin, likewise, in ignoring political prejudices incurred bitter enmity from her family and friends; thus were both deprived of the social privileges that were theirs by inheritance, and of the resources they might have otherwise enjoyed. Domestic felicity compensated for the sacrifice, and as Monsieur Guérin was a naval officer commanding a good salary there was no other sentiment on the part of the young couple than that of contentment in the simple life they had voluntarily embraced. God blessed their union with four children—two sons and two daughters. One son died in infancy; the other, having attained the age of seven years, accidentally set fire to his bed-clothing and perished in the flames before the awful accident was discovered. The daughters lived to an advanced age, adding lustre to the name and reflecting great credit on religion.

The first daughter granted to Monsieur and Madame Guérin was the child of grace and benediction to whom this narrative refers. She was born, as we have said, on October 2d, the feast of the Guardian Angels; and it seems significant, as the sequel will show, that the date of her birth should be the day set aside by the Church to honor with a special office those celestial spirits whose guardianship was exercised in so remarkable a manner throughout her eventful life.

She was taken to the church the same day to be baptized and was called Anne-Thérèse. Added to the joy of the parents upon receiving her back, now in the beauty of her baptismal robe, was a sort of premonition

that inspired them with a feeling of reverence. Her future sanctity seemed foreshown in the expression that settled upon her features, a peculiarity that distinguished her throughout life, as we learn from the testimony of one of her daughters in religion, who wrote of her after their first meeting: "Apart from her singular and most benign expression, she can scarcely be called beautiful; but there is an indefinable charm in her countenance that causes one to think it is the reflection of baptismal grace and holiness."

The deep and tender piety of Monsieur and Madame Guérin inspired them to consecrate their first-born to the Blessed Virgin, thus to place the innocence of their daughter in a very special manner under the protection of the august Mother of God, conceived without sin. One of the child's earliest recollections was that of being called the Blessed Virgin's *petite fille,* an appellation she deemed an exceptional honor; and nothing appealed to her infantine sense of wrong so efficaciously as the thought of displeasing God's holy Mother and thereby losing this dear Mother's love and favor. This tenderness increased with her years. It found expression in her choice of prayers and canticles, also in the erection of simple shrines before our blessed Lady's pictures where she took devotional delight in placing the flowers she had gathered from fen and hillside. Her devotion to the Blessed Virgin would seem alone to forecast her future sanctity, since the doctors of the Church tell us that devotion to the Mother of God is a mark of predestination. There seemed to be no other sign in our little girl, for she grew up like most children, often incurring

chastisement for her childish faults, though these were traceable more to her buoyancy of spirit than to an intractable disposition. "I always had a horror of sin," she said towards the close of her life, "and from the time I began to comprehend that such things as playing truant, teasing my companions, and asserting myself were wrong, I had very little attraction towards those things for which I was formerly chastised." In her instructions to the teachers whom she was forming, her counsels for the government and training of children were based largely on her own experience. "I did not think much about the punishment I would incur," she added; "there was a satisfaction in doing what I wanted to do. Inspire them (the children) with a higher principle than that of fear, which courageous characters will ignore to a great extent."

Mademoiselle Thérèse Guérin's career began in the years closely following the greatest revolution the world has ever known. Not only France but all Europe was suffering from the consequences of that indescribable catastrophe which society, government, finance, and commerce all shared in common. But the greatest havoc produced by the revolution was in the order of religion; and education was consequently affected in a most deplorable degree. When the priests had been restored to their churches they had not been able to establish schools as they desired. The teaching orders of men and women having been driven out of France, wherever a school was started the priests of the parish had to assume the duties of teachers. Many instances are recorded in which the arduous work was pursued devotedly; but the course of instruction

necessarily suffered frequent interruptions from the more urgent demands on the clergy in the exercise of their ministry; in fact, it may be said that during this period there was nothing in the educational line beyond that of private tutorship.

Madame Guérin, a person of good education and refined attainments, was well fitted to discharge the duties of instructress to her children, and from her they received their earliest lessons. She taught them, besides the elements of religion, the rudiments of the language and of mathematics; history, too, was a part of their daily study. They were familiar with the Bible stories, and were surprisingly conversant with the history of their times in all its details, particularly of the crisis just passed, the immediate results of which were making themselves so severely felt.

But at nine years of age Thérèse Guérin was confided to the care of a young woman who undertook to conduct a school in her own dwelling. Here the child at once manifested her superior talents; but being so much in advance of the other pupils she derived comparatively little benefit from this arrangement. While her attendance contributed very little to her intellectual improvement, it discovered that she was a leader among the children. They gathered around her and obeyed her every dictation without demur or objection, so completely were they under her sway. She herself was well aware of her prestige, and it was natural that she should be flattered by it. This consciousness of ascendency might have proved a rock of peril to her, as the thirst for power unsatisfied with a small measure soon leads to despotism and tyranny,

had not her careful home-training borne its fruits. She grew up with a charming disposition, preserving at the same time all the strength of her vivacious and remarkably firm character.

Mademoiselle Thérèse did not get interested in her studies, and the restraint imposed upon her was so irksome that she sometimes escaped from her tasks and spent the day roaming about among the hills. Before the end of the first year this so-called school was closed, to the great delight of the children, especially Madame Guérin's little daughter.

A very special providence for the child at this time was the arrival of a distant relative, a seminarian, who entered the family to await opportunities of continuing his ecclesiastical studies. He became greatly interested in his little cousin, and volunteered to become her private tutor. This pleased the child's fancy; it also proved a source of incalculable benefit to her, her comprehensive mind expanding wonderfully under this new influence.

The Guérin home bordered on the sea. The house was on an eminence whence a gentle slope led to the shore, distant not more than the tenth of a mile. A fine view of the vast expanse was commanded from the windows having an eastern aspect, a sight well calculated to move the depths of the soul and inspire themes for poetic enjoyment. The sea had great attractions for Mademoiselle Guérin; she would spend hours on the strand watching the waves as they advanced or receded, or at night lie awake contemplating the moonlight playing upon the glassy surface. The vast body of water impressed her forcibly with its

symbolism; there, it might truly be said, she began to be "conversant with God." Having once learned that the vastness of the sea is an image of the immensity of Him who set its bounds, she could never look upon the waters without fixing her thoughts upon that blessed home beyond the sea of time and experiencing a longing for things that were not of earth, a longing which increased as she advanced in years, and which laid the foundation for that contemplative and meditative spirit which was habitual to her in later life. To those youthful musings may be traced the thought of *eternity*, an abiding thought of her maturer years, a thought, too, that often carried her back in spirit to the shores where first she looked upon the sea in its symbolic aspect, and which inspired her with an admiration that often held her spell-bound.

We are not aware that there was anything in the early life of this child of benediction that could be considered marvellous. To the ordinary eye she was only a good and very bright child. Those who saw into the secrets of her heart, however, understood more, their spiritual insight discerning a singular purity of soul. This incomparable grace, together with her precocious understanding, procured for her the favor of receiving her first holy communion at the age of ten years. When told to prepare herself for this happy event, her joy was inexpressible. She had prayed for the favor of being admitted soon to the holy table, but the answer to her prayers came so much sooner than she expected that her surprise was as great as her joy. In later years it was a special subject of thanksgiving with her that she had been

allowed to receive the Bread of angels at so early an age; and it was her practice to favor the admission of children to their first holy communion as early as possible. When it was objected that they did not understand what they were doing, she replied that they would never understand, and that if they had been well instructed and the impression had been made upon their young minds that they were about to perform the greatest act of their lives, they should not be kept from the fountain of all grace and light. "Their innocence," she would say, "is their best preparation; while untainted by worldly influences they often have greater enlightenment than at a more advanced age, for *sin darkens the understanding.*"

Mademoiselle Guérin had the good fortune of possessing in her confessor not only an enlightened director but a true friend who watched carefully over the welfare of her soul. At the time of her first communion, when she confided to him her desire to belong to God alone, the good old curé did not treat the matter lightly, as one might expect, in view of her tender years; he encouraged her to cherish this desire, and assured her that she would one day belong to God alone, if she did not take back the heart she then consecrated to Him. It was a remark that any one might make without the gift of prophecy, and we cannot say that the holy old priest was vouchsafed a glimpse into the future of his youthful penitent; but to Mademoiselle Guérin's mind her confessor's assurance carried the conviction that she was destined for a special work which would be discovered to her later. She never revealed to any one else at this time what her desires

and intentions were; however, her resolution was fixed, and her plans for the future grew up with her, as it were, although as to detail there was nothing definite.

When she was nearly twelve years of age her father accompanied Napoleon into Spain, and, later, was occupied in blockading ports in the Mediterranean, at the time that Marshal Suchet was laying siege to Saragossa, Terragonia, and Valencia. When the emperor returned to France preparatory to his Russian campaign, Monsieur Guérin, who was then in the waters of the North African coasts, obtained a furlough and returned to spend some weeks with his family before setting out for Russia. He had been absent about two years, during which time it had not been possible to exchange letters often, owing to the greatly disturbed condition of the country, warfare existing almost everywhere. Having disembarked at Toulon, Monsieur Guérin forwarded the glad message that he was on his way home, and would probably arrive almost as soon as the announcement. With full pay for his services he set out alone from Toulon, in order to reach Avignon in time to travel with a party intending to journey in the same direction. The days passed into weeks, the weeks into months, and feverish anxiety succeeded to the happy anticipations of the little family circle. At last the intelligence reached them that Monsieur Guérin had met with a tragic death at the hands of brigands not far from Avignon. The shock of his cruel fate intensified unspeakably the sorrow of his bereaved family; and as his Napoleonic sympathies had not mollified the resentment entertained for Madame Guérin by the members of her

family, all devoted to the cause of royalty, misfortune induced only a greater estrangement from those who, by natural ties and by reason of more favorable circumstances, were in a position to render her grief less poignant. Added to the old sorrow of her child's burning to death, this new grief and the thought of being left alone in the world with two children caused her health to give way, and a severe illness followed.

Mademoiselle Guérin was now in her fifteenth year; her sister only in her ninth; on her, then, depended not only their happiness but even their means of subsistence. She had been a remarkably precocious child, evincing a strong determination united to great tenderness of affection, the cause of her childhood faults as well as of her later admirable virtues; these joined to a lively disposition and perfect docility to parental authority gave promise of a beautiful character, more beautiful indeed than one would have ventured to portray, and which was now revealing itself as a happy surprise to those who were interested in the family. Realizing that, besides the care of her sick mother, the charge of the home devolved upon her, she assumed the management of all the domestic affairs with characteristic energy and courage. The gravity of her mother's illness awakened great uneasiness; the care of her little sister was no inconsiderable task; yet she faced all as a matter of duty, taking the initiative wherever sacrifice was demanded and manifesting a remarkable prudence for one of such tender years. This courage of her youth was the heroism of her later life in embryo; formulated it might read thus: *To meet resistance with resistance;* for the spirit

that recoils before difficulties, that timidly cringes under the law of suffering, and breathes only pessimistic vapors is not capable of high and noble things, is not a fit instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of any great work. In order that good may be done great courage is needed. Opposition must come, must be expected; this is only nature's law requiring for growth an expansive force with its consequent pain. Hamlet's "Only that good may be done without obstruction" is an impossible condition. Obstruction there will always be; but the meeting of opposition with firmness, the adjusting of difficulties with skill, and the prudence to use but not to force issues combine to give us the valiant type, rare among the sons of men; the only type, however, through which the plans of God can be carried so as to present anything worthy the divine originator. Nature alone does not provide all the qualifications for doing good; grace must supplement; and it is in the combination of natural and supernatural powers that will be found the key to that fitness which made the Apostle of the nations say, *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*[1]

This courage of soul, implying a more than ordinary degree of faith, is the power that will enable one to meet resistance with resistance; nay more, to surmount obstacles and advance. It is the indispensable power in the accomplishment of noble and zealous enterprises, whereby human agency combines with the divine in the sublime work of the apostolate. It must not be forgotten that the missionary vocation of every

[1] Phil. iv. 13.

Christian comes with the regenerating waters of baptism. Each sacramental grace thereafter bestowed should strengthen and render more fruitful this inherited mission. The words of St. James, *Faith without works is dead,*[1] clearly designate this apostolic duty; as also do those of St. Paul to Titus: *Of these things I will have thee affirm constantly that they who believe in God may be careful to excel in good works.*[2] It is clear, further, that the general ethical principle, DO GOOD AND AVOID EVIL, is a twofold precept; but the positive part, allowing freedom of choice in many cases, is frequently overshadowed by the peremptoriness of the negative command; and, in the lethargic tendency to drift through life with as little inconvenience as possible, "sins of omission" is a category too often removed from human view.

But a living, efficacious faith bears continually in mind this dual commandment; it realizes that HE WHO HATH NOBILITY HATH OBLIGATIONS; that the high dignity of the Christian vocation imposes exalted duties; and it urges to pursuits, not according to the Ciceronian precept, DO GOOD BECAUSE OF THE NOBILITY OF GOODNESS, AVOID EVIL BECAUSE OF THE DISGRACE IT BRINGS, but according to the motive it discerns in the pure light of divine illumination—the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

While the principles of action by which individuals are governed originate both in constitutional tendencies and in environment, to educational influences is largely due the sentiment of faith so elevating and inspiring,

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[1] James ii. 20. [2] Titus iii. 8.

so productive of beautiful examples in the devout Christian home, whether in the order of action or of suffering. Thérèse Guérin's soul unfolded to the religious influences of her surroundings like the opening bud to the morning sun, and the perfume of her innocent life was wafted afar, a delight to all who could discern and appreciate the beauty of youthful piety and filial devotedness.

Madame Guérin was not one of those who taught by precept rather than by example; on the contrary, it was from what they saw rather than from what they heard that her children received their strongest impressions. Her life was laborious and full of sorrows; yet a firm and energetic faith always sustained her in her multiplied afflictions; her sincere piety recognized in all *the power that knoweth to draw good from evil;* and, though she could not penetrate the mystery of the cross, GOD'S HOLY WILL BE DONE was ever on her lips. Nevertheless there are times when the soul's energy does not find adequate sustaining power in physical strength; thus was it now with Madame Guérin, and nature gave way beneath the shock of her husband's tragic death. Though she would say repeatedly, *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be His holy name!* though she would teach the children at her knee that as sorrow was Our Saviour's portion it is likewise the portion of all His true followers; though she knew He wounds but to heal, her faith and resignation could now yield their testimony only in the passiveness of extreme debility. Broken in health, wounded in affection, reduced almost to destitution, the shock to her nervous system left her

in a most precarious condition. Apart from tender care, unusual tact was necessary to save her from more threatening perils; this her daughter manifested in an admirable degree, a grace that she acknowledged to be the fruit of her constant and earnest prayer.

Mademoiselle Guérin showed none of those variations usual to the developing years of maidenhood—rapid transitions from sober judgment to fickle thought with as quick returns to unexpected seriousness. Her conduct was uniformly steady, her absorbing thought being of her mother. Her devotedness was more than filial, it was heroic; and the cheerfulness of her disposition left very little room for suspecting that she realized the responsibility resting upon her, or that she ever fancied she could be happier in circumstances other than those in which she was then placed. Her life at this time exemplified most truly how "the heart that goes out of itself gets large and full of joy." This admirable disposition in the daughter had a soothing and restorative effect on the mother, who gradually, though slowly, returned from the gates of death. It also gained the sympathy of many warm-hearted friends, but they could only proffer kindliness; for the delicacy often felt by persons of refined and noble sentiment suffering reverses raises a barrier around their situation that cannot be crossed by the most tactful without inflicting deeper wounds.

"There distils a virtue out of sorrow," writes Faber, "wherein are born sympathies, and gentle moods, and little self-denials, and chaste joys." These were the fruits of Mademoiselle Guérin's early years, and they gained for her a wide circle of admiring friends.

Though she had not been able to continue her studies after her father's death, her education did not suffer materially. A good foundation had already been laid; she was very fond of reading history and literature, a taste that had been wisely directed by her cousin, who carefully excluded unprofitable matter, giving her instead only the best for both mind and heart; moreover, her mother's quick intelligence and her father's calm, calculating, courageous disposition being characteristics also of her gifted mind, every new experience proved a factor of greater development.

## CHAPTER II.

VOCATION. — THE SECRET DISCOVERED. — MADAME GUÉRIN'S OPPOSITION.—HER DAUGHTER'S INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR TRIALS.—MADAME GUÉRIN SUDDENLY WITHDRAWS HER OBJECTIONS.—THE CARMELITES.—THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE.

Mademoiselle Guérin did not grow up in happy unconsciousness of her passing youth, nor was she indifferent to the fact.

Ambition is the ruling passion of the heart. There is none so lowly born in whom this fire does not burn. It is an ember under the ashes and needs but a breath to fan it into flame. Natural principles developing simultaneously with bodily growth, individual preferences begin to manifest themselves even in the tenderest years, as slight observation of juvenile ways attests; and, although the young mind looks forward as into a land of dreams, there is an object in the prospect that attracts its genius and shapes its plans. With the lapse of childhood the future becomes a question of greater seriousness; this was now the case with Mademoiselle Guérin, who felt that the one great idea of her childhood was materializing into a vocation the aims of which furnished subjects for her constant reflection.

For upwards of four years her mother's feeble health

had imposed duties that were clear and imperative. Mademoiselle Thérèse had willingly resigned herself during all this time to what was evidently God's holy will in her regard, and there was not the least suspicion of the longing that filled her soul. Finally the secret was practically discovered in rather a surprising manner. In company with several young girls of her own age the conversation turned upon the choice of a husband. Each in turn expressed her preferences and her ambitions. Mademoiselle Guérin alone kept a timid silence for some time; at last, when pressed to declare her choice, she made this startling reply: "My Spouse shall be King." A sudden blush, followed by deadly pallor, told that there was a secret they had not suspected. She instantly left the group, too embarrassed to withstand their curious questions. All who heard her were astonished. They said among themselves that her mother's family were devoted royalists, and a Bourbon was again on the throne of France; but what had that to do with her? Did not the law stand between her and her ambitions? None other than the most extravagant day-dreamer would have aspirations such as her words seemed to indicate. They knew well that Mademoiselle Guérin's good, practical judgment would never commit her to such vagaries. The incident, as was natural, awakened many surmises; and though the mystery could not then be cleared away, the impression soon became general that something extraordinary was contemplated by Madame Guérin's elder daughter.

The pleasures of the world had no attractions for Thérèse; vanities of dress were too puerile to engage

her attention; the insecurity of position, the instability of wealth, the ephemeral life of honors had been a strong object-lesson to her, and she was determined to place herself beyond their powers of seduction. Little Étables was not much in the eyes of the outside world; yet it had arms to raise, spirits to dare, and lives to lay on the altar of sacrifice. Unostentatious piety had always nurtured Mademoiselle Thérèse's magnanimous soul, and she now said to herself, "If it be noble, if it be grand to perish on earth's battle-fields in our country's cause, can it be less noble, less grand to give the death-blow to nature on the battle-fields of the heart?"

It was not long before the above-mentioned report spread over the town, nor was it strange that Madame Guérin should hear of it. When she questioned her daughter as to the meaning of her words on that occasion, Mademoiselle Thérèse declared her resolution to retire from the world and to accept none other for her spouse than "the immortal King of ages."

Madame Guérin had long suspected her daughter's intentions; but it is one of those inscrutable ways of divine Providence for the purification of His chosen ones that they should often suffer most from those they love most. Madame Guérin combated her daughter's resolve with incredible severity, to the great surprise of many who knew her; besides her opposition had no reasonable grounds, for she was no longer an invalid, and her younger daughter, Marie, was of an age to render whatever assistance she might need. Mademoiselle Thérèse experienced a bitter trial in her mother's harshness and want of sympathy; but this

was not all: other methods calculated to shake her resolution were a cause of still greater suffering and annoyance. Suitors pressed their attentions upon her, flattering promises of different kinds were made to her as inducements; but all to no purpose.

On one occasion when she said she felt her life in the world was so aimless that she must do something for God and souls, they said sneeringly to her, "What can a woman do?"

The world could only scoff at a woman's thought presuming to undertake anything rising above a height beyond which their dim vision could not reach. They did not seem to know that from the moment the Lily of Israel was chosen to carry out the most stupendous design in the history of the whole human race—the plan of redemption—woman's agency has combined with every great work, either as its inspiration or as the medium of its accomplishment. That it should be so is not easy to establish; that it is so is an incontrovertible fact. We read in Isaias:[1] *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.* And St. Luke announces that through a woman the time of salvation is at hand: *And the virgin's name was Mary: and the angel being come in said unto her: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. . . . Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of*

[1] Isa. vii.

*David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.*[1] Exulting in the fulfilment of prophecy the Evangelist states the angel's message: *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . This day is born to you a Saviour.*[2]

Again, turn to the pages of Holy Writ and see a Judith[3] delivering her people from the cruelty of Holofernes; an Esther[4] from the wild ambitions of an intriguing Aman. And in the early ages of faith when the light of Christianity is diffusing its warmth and gladness, examples are not wanting. Is it to lead a plighted love to the throne of the heavenly Bridegroom? Behold a Cecilia. Is it to confound the philosophers of Alexandria? Behold a Catherine. Listen to a Eulalia fearlessly and boldly attacking the tyranny of paganism in the face of its mighty emperors. Witness a Monica whose prayers and tears have given to the Church the prince of doctors, St. Augustine. Who but Clotilde leads a nation to the feet of Christ the King? And in later times when France is to preserve her national identity, is the leader to battle other than the "Maid of Orleans"? For the interests of humanity, St. Jerome sends a body of women into the streets of Rome. To carry the light of faith into the darkness of heathendom, St. Ursula starts with her band of educators for the shores of Britain; and to kindle anew the fire of love which for ages had illumined the world from Carmel's heights, St. Teresa makes her wonderful reform. Who

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[1] Luke i. 26–33. [2] Ibid. ii. 10. [3] Judith viii. [4] Esther i.

rolls the thunders of divine vengeance against the hesitating popes at Avignon if not the Swedish princess St. Brigid? And if it is to bring back the Sovereign Pontiff to Rome after an exile of seventy years, is it not St. Catherine of Siena that accomplishes the deed? Then the secret of all secrets—the love of the Heart of Jesus for man—to whom is it confided but to the hidden, humble Visitandine, Blessed Margaret Mary? In like manner, when in the opening years of the nineteenth century the ecclesiastical power sought means of redress from the evils in which all Europe had been deluged by the awful revolution, women were always to be found associated in the interests of God and His people.

Mademoiselle Guérin felt from her early youth that she was destined for some special work, she knew not what, but it seemed a career other than that upon which she was now preparing to enter. Some of her spiritual guides intimated that the designs of God might be thwarted by her late determination, as there were other works in which she might engage that would redound more to the honor and glory of God than the life of complete seclusion from the world which she proposed to herself. If she urged her special attraction for a life of prayer and retirement, she was met by the reply that there was greater charity in devoting one's energies to the needs of religion in the world; that such a life was not incompatible with a life of prayer, even if not so conducive to it. This consideration had great weight with her, coming as it did from those whose spiritual discernment was widely acknowledged and esteemed; besides, her

purpose had in view only God's greater glory. A state of doubt and anxiety, painful in the extreme, succeeded to the interior peace and sweetness which she had usually experienced. No joy within, no peace without, light fading into darkness, confidence melting into fear, strength giving place to weakness—apparently the crisis had come. Could she further resist those maternal endearments and entreaties? or again, those afflicting censures and denunciations? Was it not a temptation that caused her to cast aside the counsels given her? Some advices she had indeed rejected, but not all; not her old confessor's counsel, which had been her only encouragement throughout the long struggle; and when to her sorrow he was removed from Étables to Saint-Brieuc just at the time her soul needed him most, she often went thither to consult him and receive encouragement from his fatherly kindness. He always urged her to firmness in her resolution, assuring her that the grace of God would finally triumph in her cause. This period of trial lasted about five years. If it had been a time of much suffering to Mademoiselle Guérin, it had likewise been a time of much prayer and austerity, consequently of great accessions of grace and many heavenly consolations.

Suddenly and without apparent reason, Madame Guérin withdrew her opposition. Entering her child's room one night, long after both were supposed to have retired, she said to her: "My daughter, you may go; you have your mother's consent and blessing. I can no longer refuse the sacrifice God asks of me." She found Thérèse on her knees before a statue of the

Blessed Virgin; there they both remained for a long time unable to express their feelings except by sobs and tears. Madame Guérin thenceforward endeavored by every possible kindness to atone for her past unjustifiable opposition. This was a new sorrow and temptation to the tender heart of her daughter; for, although vocation is a powerful grace, it does not remove from the heart its natural affections; on the contrary, it intensifies them by purifying them in the love of God. Leaving father, mother, friends, and all, is a sacrifice which those only can fully understand who have experienced its pangs. It seems to be the price asked by the heavenly Bridegroom for the inestimable gift bestowed upon His favored ones—a religious vocation. Happy as Mademoiselle Guérin was over her mother's change of sentiment, the separation now to take place was singularly painful. The withdrawal of the grace of sensible fervor and courage at a time it would seem most needed, showed that this heroic soul was treated as the greatest saints of God often are: stript of every consolation, they more perfectly resemble Jesus Christ, their divine Model.

The details of Madame Guérin's singular and sudden change of mind have not been handed down to us; her daughter knew all, but she modestly refrained from disclosing more than that it was brought about in a supernatural way. It is supposed that Madame Guérin had been vouchsafed a visit from an angel; for once, in later years, being in a very perplexed situation, Mother Theodore made the remark that she would confide the case to her guardian angel, as on one occasion he had spoken to her mother for her.

The words would seem to refer to this incident; nor should we be surprised, knowing the fervor and purity of her life, and the great devotion she always entertained towards the heavenly messengers of God.

Madame Guérin had a magnanimous soul, which caused her to be as fervent in reparation as she had been unreasonable in her daughter's regard. That she never repented having made the sacrifice is proved by an incident which occurred several years later. Monsieur Louis Letouzé, her son-in-law (her younger daughter, Marie-Jeanne, was married at this time), accompanied her in a visit to Mademoiselle Thérèse, who had entered the convent. He could not understand why so charming a person should bury herself within convent walls, and proposed to charge himself with procuring a dispensation for her from the Holy See if she would consent to return home. Madame Guérin hearing the proposal exclaimed: "What! take back from the altar the victim that has been offered?" Evidently Monsieur Letouzé had little idea of the obligations of vows, and still less of the character of her who had assumed their responsibilities. But this takes us in advance of our narrative.

Having obtained her mother's consent, it now remained for Mademoiselle Guérin to choose the place of her retirement. Carmel had been her choice from early childhood, long before she felt assured of having a religious vocation. The prayerful and austere life of the daughters of St. Teresa, her patron by baptism, had great charms for her, and inspired many of the practices that were habitual to her. It would seem, besides, that her natural temperament, and her train-

ing in the school of suffering and abnegation, gave her a character perfectly adapted to their rule. But the dews of Carmel were not to water this seed of religious vocation. An unexpected acquaintance with a member of the Community established at Ruillé-sur-Loir influenced her decision, and she sought and obtained admission among the Sisters of Providence. The title of this flourishing Congregation appealed powerfully to her, and, though she ever retained cherished memories of her Carmelite friends—those good religious whose encouragement was one of her sweetest comforts during her long years of trial—she transferred the allegiance of her affections to the order she embraced; for both they and she knew that it is not we who choose God, but He chooses us.

## CHAPTER III.

ORIGIN OF THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE.—ABBÉ DUJARIÉ AT RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR.—"LITTLE PROVIDENCE." — BRANCH ESTABLISHMENTS. — MADAME GIROUARDIÈRE'S ASSISTANCE.

A FEW hours' ride from Paris in a southwesterly direction, and we are at Ruillé-sur-Loir, a village that shared in all the vicissitudes which the great revolution produced in the surrounding country.

Looking back a century it is no longer *la belle France* that we see. The vine-covered hills are laid waste, comfortable hearths are forsaken and left in ruins, and the despondent winds sing funeral dirges, nature mourning like Rachel for the loss of her children and will not be comforted because they are not. Gayety and splendor are exchanged for widow's weeds, and the despair of spent passion mingling with the echoed cry of the guillotined king is the threnody of the once happy and exultant heart.

The rising generation receives its legacy of misery with hardened indifference. The soft light of faith and trust and love which used to beam from the eye of the people gives place to furtive glances and lurid flashes of hatred and revenge. They have strayed from their God; what have they left to them? *And Ephraim is my first-born!* fair France the first-born

of the Church! What has become of the spirit of sanctity exhibited by a St. Martin, St. Gregory of Tours, St. Denys, St. Bruno and the Chartreuse, St. Bernard and Citeaux, St. Benedict and Cluny? What of post-mediæval holiness in a St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis de Sales, Père Eudes, M. Olier, and St. John de la Salle? But if, as Tertullian says, the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians, shall not that saving tide be the agency of restoration in a land whose soil has been saturated with the blood of its own children? Wonderful, admirable providence of God! If the martyred Carmelite, Ursuline, and Dominican sanctified the scaffold or fed the flame at the stake, scarcely had they vanished when, from the ashes, came forth willing hearts to continue, though in other forms, that life of faith and love which always exercises an irresistible force for good.

He who could raise up children to Abraham from the very stones brought forth here and there fresh flowers to beautify His garden, souls to be interested in God's work; souls to labor and to suffer for the glory of the King and His kingdom; souls to lift up the gates of Sion and to unfurl again to the winds the blazing banners of beauty and truth, the royal ensigns of Christ and His Church. Thus we see spring up, almost simultaneously, new workers, new associations, and new orders and congregations throughout France, and we pause but to ask, "Hast thou known the gift of God in this thy day, O thou land of predilection?"

The diocese of Mans early enjoyed the privilege of possessing zealous laborers among its clergy. The small as well as the great profited by their sacerdotal

exertions, so that the least pretentious towns sometimes had institutions that would be the proud boast of their nobler sister cities. The little hamlet of Ruillé-sur-Loir was thus singularly favored. The prestige it derived by being chosen as the place for the establishment of a religious congregation that soon became greatly respected in the Church, is the foundation of its historical importance. As its Community is comparatively little known in the New World, some details are here presented, taken from "Notices Historiques," which were published in 1873 under the auspices of the administrative faculty at the mother house of the Sisters of Providence at Ruillé-sur-Loir, and which it is thought will not prove uninteresting.

When the storm of rebellion broke in its fury in 1790, M. François Jacques Dujarié was a seminarian at Angers, where he had recently received the order of deaconate. Obliged to flee, he sought shelter in a weaver's cellar at Chantenay. Finding that he could not remain there in security he purchased his safety by disguising himself as a shepherd and actually engaging in the care of sheep. For some time his measures were successful; but he became suspected again, and flight alone saved him from the iniquitous oath or the scaffold. Later he entered among the municipal guards in whose ranks he was raised to military honors.

A very special providence in regard to the young M. Dujarié manifested itself. Escaping so many dangers often in a manner little short of miraculous, evading the vigilance of Robespièrre's emissaries, and soon after that tyrant's downfall, succeeding in receiving the priestly ordination in secrecy (he was ordained

in a barn by Mgr. Saint Papoul, and said his first Mass in a cellar), he seemed destined to no ordinary end.

Just as a builder will chisel and polish by lengthened labor the stones to be used for a very fine edifice, so when Almighty God has great designs upon a soul He Himself prepares it during a course of trial and suffering even for years in advance. All the wounds and bruises of the warfare, all the spoliation, all the crushing ordeals to which it is subjected are but forms of the refining and tempering process that prepares it to sustain the superstructure which later on shall be raised. M. Dujarié's trials during those years of hardship, want, and persecution greatly strengthened his soul in faith and zeal; and in after years, when the distresses, labors, and dangers attending the priestly office pressed heavily upon the Lord's anointed, the courage of the young ecclesiastic was an edification and an example. Those were days, it must be remembered, when the soutane marked the object of attack and violence. The Concordat of 1801 had restored religious worship, it is true; but passion and pride had well nigh expelled the spirit that would give to religion its invigorating power, and the misery that followed in the wake of the revolution was an indescribable sequence of infidelity, lawlessness, and crime.

Abbé Dujarié had been appointed to the borough of Ruillé-sur-Loir in 1803, with faculties extending over a large district of the surrounding country. Sick at heart, but undaunted, the good curé labored in every possible manner to alleviate the distress of his people, whose moral condition, however, was far more deplorable than the poverty to which they were reduced.

While there were a few among the parishioners who preserved the faith, and a few also who were provided with means that kept them above necessity, the great majority were almost in destitution. The parish church, unfortunately, was at a great distance from the locality in which a large number of the poor and neglected dwelt. To reach them was the object nearest to the good Abbé's heart; for then he expected to gain the children who would become the hope of the parish. Appeal to the humane sentiment is one of the most effective means of exciting to benevolence; so when Abbé Dujarié presented a picture of the misery of his people and pleaded with some of his penitents to interest themselves in the needs of the parish, there was a fervent response to his entreaties. A society of charity was formed comprising members of both sexes; thus a good work had at least been inaugurated. But demands in the domestic and business circles did not leave much leisure for Abbé Dujarié's work. The society's promises were too indefinite to be relied upon; the Abbé then began seeking for some pious persons who would consent to devote themselves exclusively to instructing the children of all classes, and caring for the sick who were deprived of everything in that desolated country. He found two young women ready to respond to his wishes; thereupon he began preparations for his new work by building a small house for them in the most distant part of the parish. These formed the nucleus of the religious Congregation known in after years as the Sisters of Providence.

Whether Abbé Dujarié had at that time conceived the idea of founding a religious order, or whether he

simply meant to supply the needs of his parish by a benevolent association under his personal direction whose members were to assume no grave obligations, cannot be stated with certainty. Would it not be easier to procure religious already established, Madame Barat's Daughters, for instance, whose foundation had recently been begun at Paris? The purpose of some of these associations embraced the same works of charity. Why multiply Congregations when those already established can scarcely find subjects enough to continue their existence?

Providence had ordained Abbé Dujarié for a work which he may have been far from anticipating. The thought to found a religious body seems to have come later and to have developed in his mind only as he saw his spiritual children increase. It might be said, then, that he was rather drawn into his work, which grew as of itself. Even had he contemplated founding a conventual body the decree of 1809 suppressing religious orders would not have added to its feasibility.

The first attempts, whatever the original intention, belong to the year 1806. Progress was slow at the beginning; but perseverance was not wanting. The two members, few enough indeed even for the modest end proposed, now occupying their new home, at once opened a school. The little ones of Christ's flock were their first care. The teachers devoted their leisure to visiting the sick, whence they became known and greatly respected. As those generous women were seen to acquit themselves of their mission with so much zeal and success, others were drawn to imitate their example. Soon they numbered nine in that

dwelling already too small to shelter them. Two rooms, separated by a hall only wide enough to admit of a stairway leading to the attic, constituted their convent; one room served as a kitchen, the other was used for the postulants and children, the attic being the dormitory. In the winter it was not unusual to find the beds covered with snow in the morning, so badly was the roof finished. Under the stairs there was space enough for a bed and one chair; this was the Superior's apartment. The room had no other light than from the hall, no other floor than the bare earth. The narrow cell occupied by St. John of the Cross, and the equally narrow confines prescribed to St. Alexis in his father's house here found a parallel.

"Little Providence," the name they gave to their abode, was certainly very small and very poor; but the cave of Bethlehem was smaller still and poorer. This consideration, however, does not lessen the trials endured by those zealous women. Often they were without any resource save their confidence in God; yet, trusting Him they were not disappointed; for, according to the traditions of the Community and the neighboring country, they were sometimes provided for in a manner like to the multiplication of the loaves mentioned in the Gospel. As Poverty had been wooed by our Crucified Love and espoused on Calvary's height, so their primitive hardships had charms for those fervent souls which made them feel that the yoke was sweet and the burden light. Without the strength derived from the vows, which give so much courage to consecrated souls in the midst of trials and sufferings; in prayer and sacrifice; in poverty

the most austere; without any encouragement for the future, they devoted themselves heroically to the service of God in comforting the poor and guarding the lambs of His flock.

But devotion and the spirit of sacrifice could not suffice alone to found a religious Community. M. l'Abbé Dujarié was not slow to perceive that his spiritual daughters had need of a rule and of a specified time of novitiate; that they should be formed to a Community spirit and to the exercises of the spiritual life. For this purpose he arranged to place some of them under the care of Madame de la Girouardière, foundress of the House of Incurables at Beaugé, in order to initiate them into the practices of the interior life.

Madame de la Girouardière lent herself willingly to the plans of Abbé Dujarié, and received under her instruction seven novices whom she retained long enough to introduce them to the various practices of the religious life. Having given assurance of their dispositions during six or seven months of novitiate, they were given a religious costume closely resembling that worn at present by the Sisters of Providence. They then returned to "Little Providence" to teach their companions what they had learned in the spiritual life. This preparation gave a new impetus to the work: subjects offered themselves and neighboring curés began to solicit establishments for their parishes. Several were soon formed. In 1808 M. Delahaye, curé of Savigny, the zealous and learned ecclesiastic under whom Abbé Dujarié had made his theological studies, obtained a foundation for his native parish, Ternay.

In 1809 the Sisters of Providence were introduced to the parochial needs of Thoré and Prunay; the succeeding years houses were opened also at Montoire, Vendôme, and Azé; yet progress was not rapid. After an existence of twelve years, while there were seven establishments, they were all very poor and had very little prospect. There was no longer any apparent advance in any line; and because progress was not the order, retrogression had to take place. It is true, hands there were that were willing to work, hearts there were that were willing to suffer; but there was no leader to direct and systematize the work. Abbé Dujarié saw this lack and realized the inefficiency of his little band. Friends predicted that the organization must fail; ridicule even was added to sage counsel, which made the Abbé doubt the expediency of continuing the work. A period of great anxiety then disturbed the repose of his usually peaceful mind; he was on the point of abandoning all when the mercy of God intervened. *Providence of God, resource in all our necessities!* How the providence of God proved to be, to the distressed Abbé, the unfailing resource in his great necessity will be seen in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

MADEMOISELLE JOSÉPHINE ZOÉ DU ROSCOÄT.—EXILE OF COUNT ROLLAND DU ROSCOÄT.—REVOLT OF THE NEGROES IN SAN DOMINGO.—THE COUNTESS, MADAME DU ROSCOÄT, OPENS A BOARDING-SCHOOL.—THE COUNT'S RESTORATION.—MADEMOISELLE JOSÉPHINE ZOÉ DU ROSCOÄT AT SAINT-BRIEUC.—AIMÉE LECOR.—MADEMOISELLE DU ROSCOÄT AT RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR.—SHE IS ELECTED FIRST MOTHER-GENERAL.—HER DEATH AT THE CHÂTEAU DU ROSCOÄT.—AIMÉE LECOR AS SUPERIOR-GENERAL.

The time had come when Abbé Dujarié's society was to have a solid foundation. On the stones of failure a temple of triumph was to arise; for, in the words of Cardinal Newman, "He who is One, who is sovereign over, and operative amidst, and independent of the appointments He has made, has a purpose in every event, and it shall not fail." The line of demarcation may not clearly appear to our warped vision, but faith descries it, and in the perception hope is engendered which awakens a love that confidently rests, and, in resting, adores the *providence of God, hope of our salvation.*

It was from the depths of Brittany, from the midst of that people so loving in their piety and so remarkable for the firmness of their faith, so accustomed to self-

sacrifice, so submissive to the divine will, and so generous in their devotedness, that God was bringing assist-

From the "Annales Historiques" (sixty-second volume, second series), published under the auspices of the French Academy, we extract the following:

*Famille Rolland du Roscoät, Seigneurs et Comptes du Roscoät, de Kerloury, de Kernnarquer, de Kerhuelvar, de Coatmen, de Kerenez, de Kermainguy, du Savazon, etc.*

Parmi eux:

En 1430, *Raoul* ROLLAND était auditeur de la rote romaine et fut même évêque de Tréguier jusqu'en 1441. On lui doit un recueil d'ordonnances diocésaines qui firent longtemps autorité sous le nom de Rollandiennes. D'Argentré le cite parmi les hommes illustres de cette province ("Hist. de Bretagne," LI., ch. xvi.).

A la même époque, *Olivier* ROLLAND était grand chantre de Dol.

En 1768, *François-Gilles* ROLLAND du ROSCOÄT était conseiller au parlement de Bretagne.

En 1763, *Olivier* ROLLAND du ROSCOÄT, chevalier de Saint-Louis était lieutenant-colonel puis brigadier d'infanterie (1770).

En 1791, *Louis-Casimir* ROLLAND, comte du ROSCOÄT, chevalier de Saint-Louis, colonel d'Infanterie, servit à l'armée des princes, passa ensuite en Angleterre, d'où il revint prendre part à l'expédition de Quiberon et fut nommé colonel, commandant la division de Redon, ce qui lui permit d'échapper au blocus et à la destruction de l'armée royale. Il demeura caché en France jusqu'à la fin de la Terreur et se retira ensuite dans sa terre du ROSCOÄT qui avait été vendue nationalement et dont il parvint à racheter une partie. Louis XVIII le nomma chef d'État-major des Gardes nationales des Côtes-du-Nord, et lieutenant des Maréchaux de France.

Il eut plusieurs enfants parmi lesquels:

I. Son fils aîné *Amédée-Joseph* ALEXANDRE.

Celui-ci après avoir pris part à toutes les guerres de la fin de l'Empire, avoir été blessé à Leipsig, entra dans la Garde royale, assista au sacre de Charles X. comme capitaine commandant et donna sa démission en 1830.

Il occupa alors diverses fonctions administratives gratuites à Orléans, où il s'était fixé par son mariage avec Mlle. *Elisabeth* COLAS DES FRANCS.

ance to Abbé Dujarié and his struggling Community. Two heroines of charity, in the persons of Mesdemoi-

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II. *Marie-Aimé-Casimir* prit part à l'âge de quinze ans au mouvement insurrectionnel que provoqua dans les Côtes-du-Nord le retour de l'île d'Elbe, entra plus tard dans la Garde royale, où il devint capitaine, prit part à la guerre d'Espagne et à la prise de Constantine, épousa en 1846, *Laure* BAGUENAULT de PUCHESSE.

III. *Julie-Joséphine-Zoé*, supérieure générale et fondatrice (1818) de la congrégation des sœurs de la Providence de Ruillé-sur-Loir, qui tant en France qu'en Amérique compte aujourd'hui plus de 2,000 religieuses.

La descendance d'*Amédée-Joseph-Alexandre* ROLLAND, comte du ROSCOÄT, a d'abord eu pour chef *Amédée-Henry* ROLLAND, comte du ROSCOÄT, chevalier de la Légion d'honneur et décoré d'un grand nombre d'ordres étrangers; successivement consul de France à Mogador, Trébizonde, Zanzibar, Séville, puis consul général et chargé d'affaires près la République de l'Equateur. Il est mort au château du ROSCOÄT, en 1879, laissant d'unanimes regrets.

Il avait épousé *Guislène-Berthe* DESCANTONS de MONTBLANC des barons d'Ingelmunster, dont il n'eut que des filles.

*Marie*, épouse de *Raymond* ARCHAMBAULT de MONTFORT.
*Yvonne*, épouse du vicomte *Eugène* d'HERBAIS de THUN.
*Jeanne*, épouse du vicomte *Pierre* d'HERBOIS de THUN.
*Aline.*

Elle est aujourd'hui représentée par son frère *Charles-Casimir* ROLLAND, comte du ROSCOÄT, chef actuel de nom et d'armes. Il a épousé *Marie-Josèphe-Zélie* ROBERT de la MATHOLIÈRE, dont sont issues:

*Yvonne*, en religion, sœur Agnès de la Croix.
*Thérèse*, épouse de *Noël* de MONCUIT de BOISCUILLÉ.
*Henriette*, en religion, sœur Marie de la Réparation (filleule du comte de Chambord).
*Cécile.*
*Marguerite-Marie.*
*Elizabeth.*

La branche cadette descendant de *Marie-Aimé-Casimir* a produit deux filles et un fils. *Anne*, religieuse carmélite; *Madeleine*, la comtesse *Georges* de GOESBRIAND, et *Louis* ROLLAND, vicomte

selles Joséphine Zoé du Roscoät and Aimée Lecor, had united their efforts in the city of Saint-Brieuc, where they gave themselves up unreservedly to works of mercy and piety.

Mademoiselle du Roscoät belonged to a noble and ancient family of Brittany, as is shown in the subjoined document. Though brought up in opulence, she imbibed in the bosom of her family principles of the deepest faith and piety. Her natural disposition enabled her to acquire rapidly a very superior culture, while she developed at the same time the most precious qualities of heart. Her father, Louis Casimir Rolland du Roscoät, lieutenant of the Marshals of France, chevalier of Saint-Louis, was lieutenant at Beauvais when the revolution began. Obliged to flee, he emigrated with the princes first to Germany and afterwards to England. All his estates were confiscated. The distress of his family, still remaining in France became further augmented in 1793 by a revolt of the negroes in San Domingo, during which the Count lost all his vast possessions in the island. Mademoiselle du Roscoät was then compelled to employ

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du ROSCOÄT, conseiller général des Côtes-du-Nord, qui a épousé en 1883, *Yvonne* du Corail, et de cette union sont nés:

*Anne-Marie.*
*Henri.*
*Amédée.*
*Pierre.*

qui sont destinés à perpétuer un jour la descendance.

Outre ces alliances, la famille ROLLAND du ROSCOÄT est alliée aux de Rocquefeuil, Exaudy de Kerbiquet, Harscouet de Saint-George, et de Kéringant, du Guillier, de Lesguern, de Langle, de Quelen, du Vieux Chatel, de Kerleau, de Plouskellec, de Tanouarn, de la Rochejagu, etc., etc.

her talents in the support of the family. Excelling in music and painting, she gave lessons in both at Rennes, her mother receiving as boarders a few of the nobility who, like themselves, despoiled of their estates, were necessitated to adopt a very simple manner of living. After a short time Madame du Roscoät and her daughter opened a boarding-school for young ladies, but even with their best efforts they had several years of severe struggle against poverty. Adversity is a hard school, a most beneficial one, however, and it imparted valuable lessons to Mlle. du Roscoät that served her well in her future active life. Later, when her parents recovered a portion of their estates, her services being no longer necessary, she was free to follow what she felt to be her vocation, and to consecrate herself entirely to the service of God, in working for the good of the poor and neglected. The Reign of Terror had aimed a deadly blow at the religious institutions of the Church, the chief means through which the education of the people had been effected. Schools were now the great need of the country. Mlle. du Roscoät, therefore, resolved to devote her energies and talents to the instruction of youth in the city of Saint-Brieuc. Her project receiving the warm approval of the clergy she opened a private school; the poor were received free, but from those whose circumstances permitted it, a modest compensation was expected. This small income enabled her to engage an assistant who, like herself, was full of zeal and charity.

In "Unpublished Memoirs" we read of Mlle. du Roscoät: "She was the angel and the providence of the

country—Pléhédel; the poor blessed her and the sick said: 'She is so holy that she will cure us.'"

*She opened her hand to the needy, she stretched out her hand to the poor*;[1] thus was she able to speak to the heart of the people whose veneration prompted them always to speak of her as *the saint.*

There was, humanly speaking, much gratification from the work to which Mlle. du Roscoät devoted herself; she could see the good she was doing, and she enjoyed the confidence and love of all who knew her—a wide circle, indeed, for her charity penetrated into every home, no matter how poor or miserable. Much had been done in the six years that she had been at Saint-Brieuc, but she accounted it as nothing. She felt a longing for something greater, something broader, and she would repeatedly say to herself: "This cannot be all that God asks of me;" yet as the divine will did not manifest itself in a more pronounced manner, she continued her self-imposed duties. Finally, in 1816, her laudable ambitions were realized. Père de la Chapelle, a member of the Society of Jesus at Laval, known then as Fathers of the Faith, giving a retreat at Saint-Brieuc, made the acquaintance of Mlle. du Roscoät, who confided to him her pious desires. In answer he said: "My child, God wants you at Ruillé-sur-Loir." Mlle. du Roscoät had never heard of the little Community at Ruillé, so she placed herself at once in communication with Abbé Dujarié, making known to him her desire to become one of his spiritual children. The Abbé accepted her and urged her to enter immediately at Ruillé.

[1] Proverbs, xxxi. 20.

It was necessary now to make known her resolution to her father and mother. The Count was inconsolable; his many reverses and sufferings caused him to feel unequal to the trial of making another sacrifice in the departure of his daughter from the parental fireside. He entreated her most piteously not to inflict another grief upon him; and as he was in very feeble health, it was agreed by those to whom Mlle. du Roscoät appealed for advice that she should remain at home till after her father's death, which in all probability would soon occur. The Countess, her mother, placed no obstacle to the fulfilment of her daughter's vocation; so, in 1818, after the Count had gone to his eternal reward, Mlle. du Roscoät set out for Ruillé-sur-Loir.

She found "Little Providence" in a barren spot three miles from the village. From the moment of her arrival Father Dujarié never doubted the success of his work. From the day of her admission it began to develop in a surprising manner, this Rose of the Wood (referring to the etymology of the family name) being to the good, simple souls associated together there what a warm rain is to seed confided to the earth. At her entrance there were at "Little Providence" only four Sisters and six novices. The house was poor beyond description. All that presented itself to view was capable of discouraging the most intrepid. When asked later what impressions the surroundings had made on her, she candidly acknowledged that at first she shook with chills of repugnance, but that the grace of her vocation soon caused them to dissipate, leaving in her heart a most tender love for that extreme poverty.

Notwithstanding her delicate appearance and frail constitution, she deviated in no particular from the regulations of the Community; on the contrary, she embraced with great fervor the life of abnegation, prayer, and poverty there offered to her.

As early as 1806 the Congregation had a small chapel adjoining the Community house, where the Blessed Sacrament was kept, and where Mass was frequently said on week days, but never on Sunday. The Sisters were compelled to go to the parish church on Sundays and holydays, a distance that made it a very great hardship, especially in bad weather. It was a great happiness to possess under their own roof the King of heaven and earth really present in the most Blessed Sacrament. Their chapel, small and poor, was dedicated to the Holy Family, and over the altar was a picture which still remains, representing the nativity of Our Lord in the stable of Bethlehem. There the spiritual daughters of Father Dujarié went to find encouragement and strength in their life of sacrifice, contemplating Him who, being rich with all the gifts of heaven, deigned to become so lowly for the love of us. There, too, did Mlle. du Roscoät in her novitiate days pour forth her soul in burning love and find in return the consolation needed in the trials which her new manner of life imposed.

While still in the world she had yearned for a life of prayer and abnegation. She had tasted and seen that the *Lord is sweet.* This she experienced in her life of seclusion; and in her sufferings she had found the strength that lies in the bottom of Our Saviour's chalice. For the sweet and the bitter her soul still cried,

"More, O Lord, yet more." At "Little Providence" she found that for which her soul had long thirsted.

The discerning eye of the Abbé saw that she was the one destined by God to give his Community the form it needed; she, in her turn, saw there the opportunity for putting to good use those gifts with which God had so bountifully blessed her. She gave herself to the practice of the interior life with a generosity that seldom finds a parallel. She was simple, humble, and unobtrusive, and did not have the least suspicion that Father Dujarié had any special designs in her regard. It was only when the older members openly prophesied that their fervent candidate in the novitiate would soon supersede them in the work to which their seniority laid claims, that Abbé Dujarié unfolded his plans to Mlle. du Roscoät. It is needless to say this matter was the occasion of many and severe trials to her; but, as in every other circumstance of her life, she threw all her energies into the new project, to accomplish whatever seemed the will of God.

Among several important changes in the statutes which Father Dujarié proposed with a view to give his Congregation a truly religious form, one was that henceforth the novices were to be permitted at the end of their probation to take the vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, which were professed for one year and renewed at the time of the annual retreat. Another was that the Superior should be chosen by suffrage. The authority to govern had hitherto been given by Father Dujarié to the first associates, under great limitations, he himself directing everything of importance.

Several of the members, not feeling themselves called to the life of Evangelical Counsel, or having discovered their unfitness to assume the obligations of the religious life, hereupon withdrew from the Community; and it is a singular fact that the first two who had begun the Congregation at "Little Providence" were among the number.

Mlle. du Roscoät having completed her term of probation was the first to make open profession of vows. She was also the first to be elected Superior, the first to bear the name of Mother; hence the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence have always considered her the foundress. A new life was infused into the society under her administration. Everything took on a new character. Many, following the example she had given of quitting the world, deemed it an honor to place themselves under her direction, among them being her old and faithful colaborer, Aimée Lecor.

It was not, however, by the splendor of her brilliant education that Mother du Roscoät caused her little Community to expand with unprecedented rapidity; her talents alone did not initiate the progress which seemed a certain mark of divine approval. One who had the privilege of experiencing the holy Mother's solicitude and care thus writes:

Her faith, her hope, and her love of God are fully known only to those who directed her interior; nevertheless the piety springing from love was so great in her that she could never speak of God without melting into tears.

Her reputation for goodness, charity, and mildness was so great and well established far and near that it at-

tracted to our nascent society a large number of subjects, among whom were some very distinguished persons. Her humility caused her to support in silence all the difficulties she encountered in her new position, and others arising from the poverty of the convent, its great distance from the church, the reform of statute instituted, and the insufficient number of subjects needed to meet all the demands, together with the task of forming them, she alone being charged with all. She was so tender towards the Sisters that no one ever went away from her without being consoled, fortified, encouraged, and persuaded that she was particularly loved and cherished. But it was especially when they were sick that her maternal goodness and affection were displayed in their fulness. When she had done all that she could do for them, she grieved at not being able to do more. She was endowed with a most refined tenderness; her words were so eloquent, her tears so persuasive, that she subjugated hearts before they knew that they were attacked.

Such is the picture of her who was the means employed by divine Providence to draw Mlle. Thérèse Guérin to Ruillé-sur-Loir. In her frequent visits to Saint-Brieuc she had become acquainted with the work in which Mlle. du Roscoät had been engaged before quitting the world, and her admiration for that noble lady was very great; still it was not until five years later that Mlle. Guérin found herself enrolled among the spiritual daughters of Mother du Roscoät, and during that time great changes had taken place in the little Congregation of the Sisters of Providence.

With the election of Mother du Roscoät as Superior General, the Congregation became firmly established. Prospects were encouraging from all sides. Voca-

tion with her was synonymous with perfection. She had not been satisfied with ordinary virtue in herself, neither would she be content unless her daughters had aspirations as lofty as her own. Thus stimulated the young Community rose to heights of fervor; and, as God is never outdone in generosity, precious graces returned upon them from the providence of His Sacred Heart. But lest prosperity should make them forgetful that their Congregation was to be a standing revelation of God's providence, lest they should seek to expand beyond the shadow of the cross, they must again be brought, by the fire of tribulation, to realize that the work was all God's own, and that all human calculations are vain.

In 1822 Mother du Roscoät began a visitation of the various establishments conducted by her Sisters in the different cities. It was on the occasion of this separation from her household at "Little Providence" that, in union with Father Dujarié, she composed the beautiful prayer called THE REUNION, which has entered into the Rule and is recited by the Sisters every three hours. This prayer, as the Rule says, "so beautiful, so pathetic, and so pleasing to the Heart of Jesus, is as a *rendezvous* where, notwithstanding the distance that separates them, the Sisters unite to reanimate their love for Our Lord, their confidence in His goodness, their desires to imitate His virtues, and their resolution to practice mutual charity."

What sweeter *rendezvous* could they have? St. Brigid of Sweden heard from the lips of our blessed Lady these assuring words: "The Heart of my Son is sweet as honey and pure as a crystal fountain. From

it all virtue and goodness flow, as from their source. It is sweeter and more beautiful than all things, for what can be so great a joy to man as to think of the exceeding great love of Jesus shown in His labors and teaching, His sweetness and patience in the work of redemption? His love does not pass away like running water, but is faithful, lasting, and all-embracing; so that a sinner standing at the very gates of hell who cried to it for help, resolving to amend, would be saved."

Cardinal Manning adds to the saint's fervent words: "The whole mystery of God and man, and the relations of God and man in grace and glory are all written in the Sacred Heart. They that know the Sacred Heart know God; they that love the Sacred Heart love God; and they that are made like to the Sacred Heart are made like to God. It is the compendium of the whole science of God, of the whole way of salvation, and of the whole gospel of eternal life."

The prayer of REUNION, to which an indulgence is attached for every Sister of Providence, professed and novice, is as follows:

We unite with all our Sisters to adore thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus! Heart most holy, most pure, most humble, most wise, most amiable, and most merciful! We give, we consecrate and immolate our hearts to thee; deign to receive, possess, purify, enlighten, and sanctify them. O divine Jesus, render our hearts like unto Thine. Amen.

Leaving this precious legacy to her daughters, Mother du Roscoät bade the Sisters farewell on Easter

Tuesday. She expected to be absent about two months. Having visited several of the establishments, in obedience to Father Dujarié's command she complied with her mother's request and returned to the Château du Roscoät, for the purpose of settling some details relative to the family estate. While there in the midst of her family, so happy to be honored with her presence, she was seized with typhoid fever which carried her away after a long illness. This distressing intelligence was conveyed by Father Dujarié to Sister St. Pièrre, Superioress of one of the houses which Mother du Roscoät had but recently visited. His letter is as follows:

June 29, 1822.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER IN JESUS CHRIST:

I have just received your letter of the 25th inst., in which you ask tidings of your worthy Mother. Alas! I can give you only the most afflicting, the most painful for us all. She succumbed to a long and severe illness, the 25th of this month, at her mother's. O my children, what a loss for us all! It is irreparable. I hope she will be our tutelary angel in heaven. Let us hasten her happiness (if she is not already enjoying the beatific vision, as I believe she is) by the holy sacrifice of the Mass, by your communions, prayers, etc. My grief is unbounded. It is only your regularity, your zeal for God's glory, and your own sanctification that can console me; as also your renewed devotedness for your Congregation.

J. J. DUJARIÉ.

Divine Providence had assigned only four years of religious life to Mother du Roscoät. But how much had been accomplished in that time. During the three

years that she held the office of Mother Superior, she gave much attention to formulating the Rules and Constitutions with Father Dujarié, who had received practical assistance in the matter from Father de la Chapelle, S.J., which accounts for the striking resemblance of the Rule of the Sisters of Providence to that of the Jesuit order; in fact, it is based upon the Constitutions of St. Ignatius, to which it corresponds as nearly as possible.

Another work, in which Mother du Roscoät had been engaged was the erection of a new convent, to which she expected to transfer her Community at Ruillé upon her return from the visitation of the houses. The society had long since outgrown its accommodations at "Little Providence," and it was with eager expectancy that the Sisters were awaiting Mother du Roscoät's return, to be established in their new home, when her unexpected death was announced.

Mother du Roscoät was asked on her death-bed whom among her spiritual daughters she considered best qualified to succeed her. She named Aimée Lecor; accordingly, Sister Mary Lecor was elected Mother Superior at the annual retreat held in September, which office she filled for upwards of fifty years. Mother Mary Lecor was also a remarkable woman. For a brief sketch of her life we shall begin with the fact previously mentioned, that she had been associated with Mlle. du Roscoät in charitable and educational works at Saint Brieuc. The Breton dialect, which Mlle. du Roscoät never could command, and which was so necessary in her work among the poor, was the means in the order of divine Provi-

dence for bringing these two chosen souls together. Aimée Lecor, though of humble extraction, was nobly gifted. A native of the Isle of Bréhat, she was perfectly familiar with the Breton tongue.

Mlle. du Roscoät found a ready and efficient co-operatrix in Aimée, whose piety, uprightness, and firmness sensibly impressed her. She entrusted to her the school and all her other works of mercy when she decided to enter the convent at Ruillé-sur-Loir, fully satisfied to leave all in her hands. Aimée had lived with Mlle. du Roscoät nearly four years and benefited greatly by her intimate friendship. Apart from lineage there were marked differences between them—Mlle. du Roscoät was mild and gentle, Aimée Lecor, ardent and brusque. The one tended to smooth the other's rough edges; while Aimée's vigor stimulated, if possible, the zeal of her mistress, the calculating prudence of Mlle. du Roscoät was a safeguard to her impetuous colleague. But one thing they both possessed—great affection for each other, united to deep piety.

We have said Aimée Lecor's young life was singularly favored by special graces from Heaven. The most important incident, as she often said, occurred one day during the Carnival season, while she was going to a place of amusement. In passing the church an inward voice urged her to enter, but she resisted it and proceeded on her way. Scarcely had she passed the door when suddenly she was arrested, she knew not by what power, and she distinctly heard a voice calling her by name and adding, "You are going to pleasure and I am alone in My temple; there is no one here save your aunt, who has fasted since yesterday.

She still remains before Me because no one has come to replace her." Aimée was stunned at these words. She knew her aunt was called *the saint* of the town, and that she often spent several consecutive hours before Our Lord in the Tabernacle, but she did not expect to find her there after the dinner hour without having broken her fast that day. Curious to ascertain the truth of what she had heard, she turned back and entered the church. Filled with fear and wonder to find her aunt there and alone, she took her place before the Blessed Sacrament, where she passed several hours immersed in the deepest sentiments of compunction and loving sympathy for her Jesus, lonely, oh! so lonely, in the holy Tabernacle.

Aimée always ascribed her conversion to that incident; not that she needed conversion in the wide sense of the term, for her childhood and youth had been marked by a serious and tender piety; but her conversion to a more austere life dates from this event, at which time she had attained the age of twenty years. The impression made upon her was lasting, as may be inferred from her father's words when she besought him to grant her leave to embrace the religious life: "Go," he said, "I would rather have you die elsewhere than at home," referring to the austerities she practised. Her fasts were almost continual, and sharp disciplines were added to the long hours of her night vigils in prayer. Fortunate for her that her pious exercises were going to be regulated by obedience.

Aimée Lecor was very happy to be enrolled among the daughters of Mother du Roscoät at Ruillé-

sur-Loir; and Mother du Roscoät was equally delighted to receive her old assistant, whose heroic piety and aptitude for business were alike well known to her. Although at the death of Mother Du Roscoät there were about fifty in her Congregation, including professed, novices, and postulants, they were all young and inexperienced. Sister Mary Lecor was at this time thirty years of age, qualified by experience, and in many other respects superior to the other members. It was not difficult then for Father Dujarié and the Sisters to accept Sister Mary Lecor for Superior General, notwithstanding the fact that she had just completed her term of noviceship.

Mother du Roscoät had been given to Father Dujarié to help establish the Congregation; that achieved, God called her to Himself. Mother Mary was destined to continue and advance the work of the institute, and almost alone; for Father Dujarié was now busily occupied in founding a society of Brothers, to provide for the boys of his parish advantages similar to those afforded the girls by the Sisterhood at Ruillé. God blessed this second society even as He had set the seal of His approval upon the first. A number of pious and energetic young men were soon gathered together, and it was not long before the influence of their lives, consecrated to the service of God in this chosen field, was felt far and near. Unfortunately, Father Dujarié's infirmities soon became a hindrance to the further development of this new religious family. No longer able to direct it, he accepted the Bishop's plan of uniting his society, called the Brothers of St. Joseph, to the Congregation of missionary priests founded by M. Moreau, of the seni-

nary at Mans. When this union was effected, the Brothers adopted the title of the Congregation with which they became identified—"The Holy Cross."

Father Dujarié, the humble curé of Ruillé-sur-Loir, was thus the originator of two renowned religious institutes, entirely distinct, yet united in the parent root. To few it is given to initiate more than one great movement. The fact of his having given life to two organizations comprising so many details, and including so much anxiety, labor, and personal sacrifice, at the same time that a large and scattered parish was also in his charge, shows the capacity of his mind and the energy of his soul. If, like our blessed Lord Himself, who withdrew from His infant Church at the very beginning, leaving to His apostles the building up of that institution which was to perpetuate Christ unto the end, Father Dujarié retired from the superintendence of both the works he had begun, his love for his two Congregations suffered no diminution. The separation was a very painful trial on both sides; but it was understood to be the only means practicable under the altered condition of things; yet he suffered much in its realization, and so did they; and Mother Mary felt the burden now resting upon her a very heavy encumbrance.

It was the happiness of Father Dujarié's daughters—the Sisters of Providence—to attend to his temporal support up to the time of his death; but it was the privilege of his sons—the Brothers of the Holy Cross—to shelter him under their own roof and to receive his parting blessing and last sigh. Yet it is in the convent mortuary chapel at Ruillé-sur-Loir that his remains

rest in private veneration awaiting the decree of beatification, the process having been commenced at Rome, which will place our saintly founder among the galaxy of the saints, and give to Father Dujarié the glory he has merited as a confessor of the faith.

## CHAPTER V.

MADEMOISELLE GUÉRIN AT RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR.—NOVITIATE.—ILLNESS.—SHE GOES TO PRUILLY.—RECEIVES THE RELIGIOUS HABIT.—TAKES HER VOWS.—APPOINTED SUPERIOR OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AT RENNES.—OPENS ORPHANAGES.

A FEW weeks after the death of Mother du Roscoät, which occurred in June, 1822, the Sisters took possession of their new home. This has ever since remained the mother house of the Sisters of Providence in France. Its location and appointments were in every way more desirable than at "Little Providence;" there was still much to be done, however, and privations were numerous enough to satisfy the most zealous and enamoured of holy poverty. It was to this convent at Ruillé-sur-Loir that Mlle. Guérin directed her steps in the fall of 1823.

Mother Mary was delighted with her new subject. Mlle. Guérin was also pleased to be under the direction of so wise and holy a Superior. As Mother du Roscoät had found in Aimée Lecor a child after her own heart, so Mother Mary found in Thérèse Guérin one that would beautifully respond to the energies of her own great soul. Mlle. Guérin will henceforth be known to us as Sister Theodore; and it will be a source of great edification to observe that she never relaxed in

fervor from the first moment of her entrance upon the religious life. The words of St. Alphonsus Liguori, "Be resolved to suffer and to suffer much," constituted her motto, and her entire life proved that nothing in the way of suffering was too much for her generous heart. Hers was a holocaustic love, and her life was to be a whole-burnt offering.

She passed through the first weeks of her probation with great fidelity and courage, experiencing unusual joy and sweetness among the little tests that are so trying, often because they are so little and come from sources so unexpected. Nor was she spared in the training that belongs to the school of perfection; for her novice mistress, who was none other than Mother Mary herself, was an accomplished directress, and realized the responsibility now devolving upon her of forming this specially gifted and strong character.

Sister Theodore proved so docile and responsive that in an incredibly short time she had been initiated into the more advanced practices of the religious life, the Mother Superior being satisfied that the Holy Spirit was Himself rapidly leading her on in the ways of deep spirituality. Her attraction for recollection and prayer, together with her courageous embrace of the practices of self-denial, without which prayer is impossible, was the sign of her near approach to God, of a life truly and solidly spiritual. Half-hearted measures found no place in her methods; her graces, consequently, were proportioned to her efforts.

In later years she sometimes referred to this early period of her religious life, when fervor made everything seem easy; but she added that it lasted only a short

time. She was inexpressibly lonely and homesick at times, and she thanked God for having given her a severe trial of this kind, since it made her afterwards more sympathetic when she saw others experiencing the same suffering.

When only four months of her novitiate had passed she became seriously ill, and though the best medical attention was given her, all despaired of her life. As a last resort the physicians administered a violent remedy which saved her life, but left her digestive organs so weak that never after was she able to take any solid food.

During this illness the Superiors saw more clearly what a valuable acquisition Sister Theodore was to the Community, and though they had well-founded reasons for fearing that the fervent novice would never again enjoy good health, they felt convinced that God would give her grace to follow the Rule in reward for her generosity and the ardent desire she had to live and die a Religious.

Thomas à Kempis tells us that very few are improved by sickness. Sister Theodore was one of the few, for she profited so well by the opportunities her enforced leisure gave her of uniting herself more closely to the Spouse of her soul in prayer, that she soon acquired a spirit of very deep recollection, besides a fortitude that enabled her to derive great merit from her sufferings. All were highly edified at her cheerfulness, her detachment of spirit, and, above all, by the care she took that the relaxations her state of health imposed should not lead to dissipation, which always does so much harm to the soul. She was ingen-

ious in little austerities and had to be watched carefully to prevent her exceeding the bounds of discretion. The young and fervent are usually very indiscreet, but this kind of indiscretion is easier to correct than a weak disposition of soul which makes one avoid everything distasteful to nature. Sister Theodore could scarcely be called young, nor was her fervor of the type that alternates with laxity at disappointingly frequent and short intervals. The spirit of obedience distinctively marked her spiritual methods; yet she could not understand why an Aloysius, or a Teresa, or a Gertrude were beyond her imitation. Like St. Francis de Sales, she would ask for nothing and refuse nothing. No complaint ever escaped her; if the potions were bitter, or the service not all that suffering nature might desire, she was calm and patient, seemingly having no preferences or desires ungratified.

Scarcely was Sister Theodore recovered from this illness when she had to begin the duties of a missionary. The demand for new establishments was so great that Mother Mary was compelled to part with some of her novices in order to provide a sufficient number for the new foundations. Subjects had been coming in quick succession for some time, it is true; but they had to be trained in their teaching duties and in spirituality; few, even after several years, were as well prepared as Sister Theodore, after only six months' probation. Her entire youth, it might be said, had been a novitiate; and a person of her habits of mind was not likely to suffer loss in the sacrifice. It was thought, moreover, that a change of climate might restore her to more vigorous health. She was sent to Pruilly, and

the solicitous Superiors were not disappointed either in her health or in her work. At the time of the annual retreat in September she returned to Ruillé-sur-Loir to receive the holy habit canonically. On the same day she had the inexpressible happiness of pronouncing her vows, and on the same day also she was appointed Superior of the establishment at Rennes, which was a singularly difficult position at the time, owing to the state of affairs existing in that city. With the ability of one long schooled in administration, she took up the reins of government, and Rennes soon had reason to be grateful for having Sister Theodore at the head of the institution.

The circumstances that called for unusual tact originated in the evils that existed in a certain locality of the city, where for years the wretched inhabitants had been developing into an uncommonly vicious population. The name of religion had not reached them since before the days of the French Revolution, and they were living in a most deplorable state of immorality. "They had become so bold and shameless," writes one who had witnessed their depravity of manners, "that no one could pass through the streets without being insulted, and ladies had long since been compelled to avoid going through that part of the city."

The bishop and clergy of Rennes desiring to reform these abandoned people, hoped to accomplish their purpose by opening a school, whose twofold object would be to combine religious instruction with the elements of education suitable to their humble condition, and to teach the different kinds of manual labor

usually taught in an industrial school. Some wealthy persons of Rennes, whose charity and piety prompted them to works of mercy, furnished the Bishop with the means of erecting suitable buildings, and the Sisters of Providence were solicited to undertake the foundation. The Superiors consented, happy to take part in a work in which so much good was to be done, and opened their school upon the plan proposed in the year 1822.

For two years the Sisters battled against difficulties of a new kind. They had learned how to bear poverty and its attending trials; but these were not the hardships to which they were now subjected; instead, they had the discouraging experience of finding all their efforts to improve the children a complete failure. Born of depraved parents, vice was so inherent that all attempts to reform them seemed useless; they were, in the truest sense, incorrigible. This difficulty made the mission of Rennes the hardest of all those undertaken by the Community, and the Sisters employed there were disheartened. Not so Mother Mary. Fully appreciating the great work of reform, she was resolved to persevere in the task, seeing with her prophetic eye the good that would eventually be accomplished. Instead, therefore, of withdrawing from the conflict she sought for new recruits to continue the warfare. At this juncture the management of the house at Rennes was confided to Sister Theodore, who had just been professed by dispensation, one year from the time of her entrance into the Congregation.

When the new Superior appeared before the way-

ward children of that school at Rennes, they stared at her with significant impertinence, giving glances at one another that meant she too would be in tears before long, as some of their former mistresses had been seen to weep. When the time came to meet them in the class-room, Sister Theodore addressed them some remarks suited to the occasion. She had not been speaking long when one of them, apparently the ring-leader, exclaimed, "What a fool! she thinks we are going to be like Sisters." A general outburst of laughter followed. Sister Theodore tried to impose silence, but the laughter and ridicule only increased. There was no alternative but to control her feelings and appear composed. By degrees the disorder ceased, and she discreetly turned from religious instruction to subjects more congenial to their perverse tastes. Having assigned the various teachers for their tasks, she left the children without any signs of displeasure on account of the reception they had given her. She supposed that that was the worst. The following day she went to resume her doctrinal instructions, determined to make this food for their souls acceptable to them. As soon as they saw her, they cast looks around that indicated their prospective triumph. Having listened quietly to her for a few moments, at a signal from one of them all arose at once, took hold of hands, and began to sing and dance noisily like children in a frolic.

Sister Theodore had resolved to keep her self-possession even if she could not maintain order, so she sat quiet, waiting till they would be tired out and stop of themselves. Finally they ceased, and, sitting down, looked steadily at Sister Theodore, who then took a

switch that was kept in the room for refractory pupils and broke it into pieces. This seemed to surprise them, but it pleased them as well. Seeing they were now disposed to listen to her, she began calmly to speak to them. She did not reproach them for their naughtiness, nor did she once allude to the conduct they had just shown; but with a pleasant countenance she unfolded her plans for their work, and told them what pleasures they might expect if they gave satisfaction. She so worked upon their ambitions that they were captivated; in a word, the victory was gained with those seemingly incorrigible little girls.

Sister Theodore strictly kept her promises. At the close of each daily session she distributed tickets—guarantees of merit—to the deserving pupils, thus ruling her now thoroughly subdued children more by persuasion than by severity. This was the method she adopted during the remainder of her life. She found the grace she needed in those trying moments by frequently invoking the guardian angels of the children, a practice she ever after maintained and recommended to all who were in any way engaged in the care of children.

The teachers whom she directed followed her methods with very good results, though it cannot be said that the reformation of those children was effected in a day. Their old habits clung tenaciously to them, and great patience, forbearance, and tact were necessary to complete the reform; but their hearts were gained; and "a teacher who has the tact of gaining the hearts of her pupils can do with them as she pleases; her counsels, her admonitions, even her reprimands are

well received." How often had not the Sisters heard these words before! They now experienced the truth and saw the wisdom of this article of their holy Rule.

After the lapse of only a few months the directors of the institution witnessed the consoling spectacle of nearly six hundred children profiting by the advantages afforded them through the munificent charity of their benefactors. It was also most consoling to see that the hour devoted to religious instruction was awaited with eagerness. Some of the most indifferent became models of piety, and this change they themselves attributed to Sister Theodore's sweet patience and interest in their spiritual welfare. In after years, several, recalling the days of their school life at Rennes, said that the example of Sister Theodore's love of God made them experience a great desire to love Him also; and when they spoke of the unction there was in her words whenever she discoursed to them on the mercy and goodness of our divine Saviour, their eyes filled with tears. Children as they were—for they were all under fourteen or fifteen years of age—they were deeply impressed, and the impression was a lasting one. The narrative further says: "The happy change in the children had a good effect on the parents, who began to reform. The practice of religion was re-established amongst them, and that quarter of the city which had so long been the abode of ignorance and its evil consequences was soon the pride of the people."

Ten years of Sister Theodore's life were spent at Rennes; but her labors were not confined to this one institution. She was commissioned by Mother Mary

to establish schools in other parts of the city, not only for the poor but for the higher classes. As the industrial school under her superintendence soon became one of the largest in the country, these other houses also flourished, as we learn from a letter addressed to her by Canon LeVacher a short time after she opened her house in America, in which he notes particularly that *her* schools and orphanages were prospering. The dignity of a teacher had always appealed to her very strongly, and the schools were the object of her liveliest interest; yet it would be surprising, knowing her generous and sympathetic nature, not to discover that Sister Theodore had done something for the poor orphans also. She was always interested in them, always solicitous about them. As their cause generally appeals forcibly to the humane sentiment, the natural facility she had for arousing the generous sentiments of persons able to contribute liberally enabled her to found and equip asylums for the homeless little ones. Her method of securing the good-will of persons of means to aid her were characteristic. She was not asking for herself, so she did not fear to be importunate in her solicitations. She engaged her donors to give freely, suggesting different motives to spiritualize the act, so that they might have merit other than the mere satisfaction of giving, which in itself is a sweet pleasure, but which has its reward in the gratification human nature experiences in relieving suffering. "These alms," she would say, "if given with disinterested motives will become the means of greatly diminishing our own indebtedness to Almighty God. Alms are quasi-sacramentals."

If pity could not be excited in favor of the poor, she had recourse to motives of honor, so that she was rarely baffled; or again, her case was sometimes like that of the woman mentioned in the Gospel, of whom the judge said, "I will avenge her because she is become troublesome to me." No matter, she attained her end, and a good work was accomplished; yet she was frequently heard to say that she had no vocation for begging, and it was always extremely repugnant to her to take upon herself the difficult task.

Whenever Mother Mary visited Rennes she would say to the Sisters: "I came here to rest. I know everything is perfectly well under Sister Theodore's supervision."

The good people of Rennes also recognized Sister Theodore's efficiency, and on many occasions made open display of their love and esteem for her. Their admiration was based principally on the good she effected where everything seemed hopeless; and the bishop and clergy repeatedly acknowledged their indebtedness to her.

Sister Theodore's business capacity caused her to be sent by the Superior General, from time to time, to transact affairs for the Congregation in different towns of Brittany. She always fulfilled these commissions with perfect satisfaction, gaining for herself a reputation for rare prudence. At this period she certainly stood very high in the esteem of all at home and abroad.

## CHAPTER VI.

SISTER THEODORE FALSELY ACCUSED.—SHE IS SENT TO SOULAINES.—LETTERS OF BISHOP DE LESQUIN. —MEDALLION DECORATIONS FROM THE FRENCH ACADEMY.— MONSIEUR DE LA BERTAUDIÈRE. —CHURCH OF SOULAINES.

No nation has ever had an unbroken record of prosperity, neither has any individual had a career unmarked by alternations of light and shade. It is the way of the law. Father Faber says: "There is no beauty where there are no shadows."

The life of Sister Theodore will exhibit this element of the beautiful in a marked degree, and from the deepness of the shadow the high lights of virtue will appear the more resplendent, even as the cross on Calvary's dark summit manifested the beauty of infinite sanctity and illumined the world with the brightness of eternal light.

It was represented at the mother house that Sister Theodore was not in sympathy with a certain measure to which the Superior General was necessitated to have recourse. An innocent remark capable of bearing a good as well as a doubtful meaning originated the rumor. It was repeated from one to the other, changed and added to, until when it reached Ruillé it had become very serious. Mother Mary was astonished

and deeply grieved. The one on whom she depended most in the very delicate matter to be the one to fail in supporting her authority! All this time Sister Theodore was in ignorance of the charge made against her. She was unexpectedly recalled from Rennes and sent to Soulaines, a small country mission, where talents like hers would find a much narrower scope.

During the years that Sister Theodore was building up the mission at Rennes and working with grand results to the public, she never lost sight of the admonition embodied in the Rules—"In order to draw down the blessing of God upon their labors, they (the Sisters) shall work courageously at their own perfection, being well persuaded that all they can do is to plant and water; God alone can give the increase." Moreover, the lowest office in the house was as honorable in her eyes as the high position of Superior. She would never allow herself a reflection that admitted preference for important and honorable work. Nor was this merely a theory with her. The most difficult and repugnant tasks she reserved to herself, and always shared in the domestic labors of the household, in which her generosity often supplanted her discretion, for she never considered what she was able to do, but what was to be done.

When she now heard from the lips of her Mother Superior, so tenderly loved, and whose confidence she never for a moment doubted, the words of displeasure and rebuke mingled with distrust, she felt a sharp pang, but made no reply. Faithful to her Rule, she endeavored to apply its salutary precepts to herself, by saying in the depths of her soul, *It is well for me, O*

*Lord, that Thou hast humbled me.* After the first emotions of surprise and pain had subsided, considering that disedification might be given by her silence, she was advised by her spiritual director to make a statement of the matter in the cause of truth and justice. Her explanation seems not to have been accepted at Ruillé-sur-Loir; at all events, the Superior's decision to withdraw her from Rennes was not reversed.

The city in which Sister Theodore had accomplished wonderful reforms, and where her indefatigable efforts had established schools that could compare with the best in France, felt her loss keenly. Testimonials of good-will and affection were showered upon her, all which, naturally, only increased her sufferings. Her friends did not know the cause of her removal, and the action seemed inexplicable to them, coming before the close of the year; but they could do nothing more than express their regret and she could, or rather she would, do nothing more than express her appreciation of their kindness. To the Bishop of Rennes, who had long been the director of her soul, however, she confided all. His letters show the esteem which he entertained for Sister Theodore, and the fatherly solicitude with which he watched over her soul in this crisis. It was great encouragement for her to receive the expression of his tender sentiments and regard. Upon learning of her removal from the episcopal city he wrote to her:

RENNES, September 13, 1834.

The time of trial has arrived for you, very dear daughter, and perhaps a terrible struggle between nature and grace has begun; the latter, undoubtedly, will triumph.

I regret very sincerely that circumstances have not

permitted you to return to your establishment, which will never forget the good that you have done in it. You know that we are all in a land of exile, and that here below we have no permanent dwelling. Look up to Heaven from time to time, and remember that we cannot gain that reward but by breaking the bonds which attach us to earth. If the work affrights us, let the recompense spur us on. Let us call to mind what St. Cyprian says—"It is impossible to exile a Christian, because he finds his God everywhere, who consoles him in the pains of this life." It is to Him you must have recourse now, and He will say to you with paternal kindness, Courage, daughter, the way of the cross is open to thee; do not listen to the repugnance nature feels; endeavor to enter the royal way with great confidence. I will not abandon thee. I am witness of the afflictions of thy heart. I will sustain thee and be Myself thy recompense. Bless the persons who struck thee. A misunderstanding has taken place. My providence has thus permitted it in order to try thee anew in the crucible of tribulations that there may not be a fibre in thy heart for any creature. Pray for thy Superiors, who are the instruments I have chosen for this purification; in giving thee the occasion of suffering they open to thee the way to heaven, which is the way of the cross.

My sisters and the priests of my household beg me to remember them to you. I reiterate, my very dear daughter, the expression of our entire devotedness, in Our Lord.

✝ J. G., Bishop of Rennes.

In November of the same year Bishop de Lesquin again wrote:

I congratulate myself on having been the instrument which God has used to alleviate your sorrow. Grief is

not reprehensible when it is restrained within the proper limits; it is even meritorious when it is offered to Him who has promised to reward a cup of cold water given in His name. If life were not beset with contradictions what assurance could we have of our submission and of our resignation to the will of God? Should we not have cause to fear that we are like those who wish to feast all the time on the sweetmeats of devotion without partaking of the bitter chalice which was drunk by Him who must be our model? I agree that calumny is a bitter trial; but you have already made giant strides in the way of perfection.

In the midst of the sick and dying you are called upon to take care both of body and soul. Why! it is almost the apostolate that you exercise. You are in fact associated in the sacerdotal ministry. I am prompted to say that God treats you almost as a spoiled child, and that, more than ever, He shows that He has designs upon you of great mercy.

That Sister Theodore did not sink under the pressure when the hand of the Lord was heavy upon her, may be inferred from the following letter written by the same estimable bishop:

RENNES, Jan. 7, 1835.

The wishes which your charity has prompted you to express, our very dear daughter, have been received with redoubled pleasure, because I am convinced of their sincerity, and because they come from a heart that loves only in God. Accept in the same spirit those that I form for you, and my heart will be in unison with yours.

So you are not only reconciled, but you are enjoying your new position. How happy I too should be were I consigned to a little corner of the earth where I could

live unknown! It seems to me that I should be very thankful to Providence, who knows how much I sigh for a retreat and the extreme need I have of it. But God refuses me this consolation which would be the sweetest of my life, and He refuses it to me because my sins render me unworthy of this grace. It is because you are more acceptable in His eyes that He has granted you this favor, though unsolicited indeed. It is a new proof of His love for you, a new motive which should increase and strengthen the love which you have for Him. He has even permitted that this boon should not at first be recognized as a sweet providence, and consequently not fully appreciated by her who received it. He hid it at first from your sight, dear daughter, because the sacrifices of faith are more meritorious, while the satisfactions of nature are reserved only for beginners. He incessantly repeats to us that His yoke is sweet and His burden light, and that all things tend to the advantage of those who love Him. He has done all things for His elect, and His crosses, even the heaviest, are worth more than all the joys which pass so quickly and leave a frightful void in the heart.

When the holy season of Lent arrived Sister Theodore was in very feeble health; in truth, she had never been well since her novitiate days. Her malady, somewhat aggravated at this period, made it impossible for her to comply with the precept of the Church, according to the letter, although all with whom she lived declared that she maintained a perpetual fast, out of necessity if not out of devotion, which latter would certainly not have been permitted by her Superiors. In this inconvenience and humiliation she again receives reassuring words from her great and good friend, the

Bishop of Rennes, who disposes of her scruples with characteristic adroitness.

This is a new contradiction that you experience, my dear daughter, consequently a new occasion of merit in the eyes of Him whose debtors we are; this fact is incontestable. Happily we are not insolvent, having at our disposal the merits of Jesus Christ. They are very abundant, undoubtedly, but this truth which is so consoling for us cannot and must not prevent our drawing from the fund of our misery all that we can get, though we are, nevertheless, living on credit. If we cannot fast, abstain, pass hours of the night in prayer, wear a hair-shirt, etc., we can all be humble, meek, resigned, patient, and charitable. Occasions of practising these virtues come often; let us profit by them, being like misers who do not neglect petty gains, knowing that little streams make great rivers.

Again he writes:

Poor C—— thanks you cordially for your good wishes and the prayers you have offered for him. He rejoices to hear that you are so well pleased with your solitude. Little by little its charms will get such a hold on your heart that I fear it will be necessary to tear you away to make you leave it. If the city offers advantages, it is not less true to say that in the country a person is more alone, and that there everything leads to meditation. Morals are more pure, scandals less numerous, dissipation less a part of one's daily bread, tastes more simple, the repose of heart and mind easy.

I know that we find ourselves everywhere, and that our miseries accompany us everywhere; that they ride behind us when we are on horseback, they sit at our side when we are in a carriage, they escort us when we go

modestly on foot; it appears that they keep us faithful company even while we are writing.

We regret that the change of climate has not improved your health. To me it is evident that by tribulation and sickness God wishes to purify you in this land of exile. The potion that He gives you is not too sweet, but He sees that sugar-plums and sweetmeats do not suit your constitution. He treats you, nevertheless, as a spoiled child, since, having expiated your peccadilloes by the purgatory of earth, you will have a passport to enter, without paying, into heaven, to which we all aspire.

Earth is not heaven we know by experience. The way that conducts thither is straight and steep, but it is not impassable. Grace is a safe guide, and it is never refused us if we ask with confidence. If in the road we traverse it happens that we make some false steps, we must not be discouraged. A great number of saints have made some also. The mercy of God raised them up. It will raise us up likewise if we only have recourse to it. Among the diseases of the body there are some which are incurable; this is not the case with the diseases of the soul. We have a physician who can cure all of them—Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The gravity of the charges that had been brought against Sister Theodore may be inferred from the strong words used by this very estimable prelate in a letter dated October 8, 1837, two years after action had been taken upon them, at which time the servant of God was despoiled of the reputation she had until then possessed:

Pains and crosses are not wanting to any one, our very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, because they enter into the designs of Providence. They are in some way our pur-

gatory here upon earth, and give us marks of resemblance to Our Lord, who joins to the title of Redeemer that of Model. That calumny should also come to try you is an evil quite unavoidable. The divine Saviour permitted that this odious weapon should be used against Himself. One of the holiest and greatest of bishops, St. Francis de Sales, had to pass through the same cruel ordeal. I could cite many others who, instead of being distressed, rejoiced that they were judged worthy to be thus nailed to the cross. Be that as it may, it is a duty to refute calumny when it may do harm to an establishment of which one has charge. Such is the nature of that which has been hurled against you. Not only has the author been wanting in justice and charity, but also in truth; for I testify, and I would also testify to all who desire to hear it, that you have carried away with you the esteem of the Bishop of Rennes and the Curé of St. Aubin; and if I did not make strong remonstrances to engage your Superiors not to tear you away from the affection of your companions, from the esteem of those who take interest in your house, and from the weeping children who attend it, the only reason was respect for that authority whose operations I must not and should not impede. I respected the motives without knowing them. Had I been consulted (a deference, however, which is not due me, and which I shall never demand), I should not have failed to request your return to Rennes. If doubts are still entertained where you are, simply request the disaffected persons to write to me concerning the matter. They shall get full and entire satisfaction. I shall not give a complimentary certificate, but a conscientious one.

What seemed a humiliation from a human standpoint was a very special providence both in regard

to the house at Soulaines and to its newly appointed Superior. It afforded her new opportunities for developing greatness of soul by giving her a field of labor differing vastly in kind from that in which she had hitherto engaged; it also left her more leisure for quiet prayer and reading. It was there that she perfected that spirit of discernment which in later years was so eminent a gift of hers in the direction of souls; there it was that she learned the necessity of complete detachment from even the holiest persons and things, in order to enter more fully into intimate union with God.

It must be confessed that though Sister Theodore could suffer courageously, she could not conceal the sorrow of her heart entirely, any more than one can hide all traces of suffering when the body is racked with pain. She sometimes spoke of the unfortunate misunderstanding to her Sisters, who were tenderly devoted to her, not indeed by way of complaint, but to show them that if they sometimes have their little trials, Superiors have theirs too, which are all the more painful because they cannot seek the sympathy, support, and encouragement that they themselves can give to their subordinates. There is probably no greater trial to a devoted Religious than that of a painful misunderstanding; but it is the ordeal through which every soul must pass upon whom God has special designs; no marked advance in the spiritual life can be made without encountering it. A very great grace is needed under such circumstances to draw benefit from the test, for, by the very nature of the case, the soul is thrown back upon herself; then, as self is a very weak prop to rest upon, spiritual loss follows, unless the

soul is careful to cling with firmness to the strong arm of God, raised indeed to strike, but also to heal. If the holy and adorable will of God were recognized at once in these untoward happenings, victory would be a general result. But the misfortune is that these wounds to nature often have the effect of obscuring faith's bright light; then the diminution of light brings a corresponding decrease of love, and Nature asserts itself, making mistakes thereby because of the misty medium through which it views matters. In those critical moments the special graces that one has insured for herself by previous spiritual economy are brought into requisition, if she sets about the combat in the right way; and with their aid self is held at bay while the soul pours itself forth in prayer. It then has the strength to say: Lord, provided that my will remain true and firm towards Thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee.

For it cannot but be good whatever Thou shalt do with me.

If Thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me to be in light, be Thou again blessed; if Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if it be Thy holy will I should be afflicted, be Thou still equally blessed.[1]

In this homage of love Sister Theodore proved her fidelity to the divine Spouse of her heart, and He who hath respect to His chosen one [2] gave many tender proofs of His sweet providence in the consolation which He afterwards bestowed upon her. He drew

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[1] Imitation, B. III, chap. 17.

[2] Wisdom iv. 15.

her nearer to Himself and spoke to her heart in ways we are permitted only to conjecture from the examples of her future life; unmistakable ways, however, for she spoke as one having had experience, and as one only could speak who had learned heavenly secrets it is not given many to know.

Soulaines became for Sister Theodore a most cherished solitude. Her talents found further development in an unaccustomed species of work which proved providential in view of her later destination. It became a part of her duty to visit and care for the sick. As she was unskilled in the profession, Mother Mary arranged to have her take a course of study in medicine. This gave her the exceptional advantage of receiving regular instructions from an able physician, from whom she acquired a considerable knowledge of medical science both as to diseases and their treatment, together with principles of pharmacy that enabled her to prepare in most cases the remedies to be used. She was thus qualified to attend to the sick of the parish. But a greater advantage resulted, in that her medical skill was one of the most fortunate features of her education in her later career.

So universal were her talents that everything to which she applied herself seemed to be her specialty; yet it might be said that she excelled in mathematics. Her pupils gave evidence of their superior training when the school inspectors of Angers made their official visit. Charmed with the class in mathematics, they examined successively every other branch, and they were unstinted in their praise in the proficiency of all. Sister Theodore was reported to the Board of Education as a

highly gifted and efficient teacher, upon which assurance she was voted medallion decorations. The honor was as unexpected as it was unique. Engaged one day with her household duties, she was suddenly met by the gentlemen who had been commissioned by the French Academy to present to her the testimonial of the government's recognition. Self-possessed always, she received them with her wonted grace, being as capable in the simplicity of her domestic occupations as in the more exalted rôle of preceptress. When they retired it was only to assert that her merit had not been half-way estimated. But the honor conferred upon Sister Theodore was painful to her humility, and no one would ever have known the object of this, their second visit, had not the school authorities themselves given publicity to the affair. They insisted that she should receive the honor publicly, in the presence of the town authorities and the curé of the parish. Sister Theodore never referred to the incident afterwards unless questioned, and then her statements were very brief.

It is remarkable that Sister Theodore's work always met with public approval. Instead of being hidden away, like the spring violet under its common leafage, exhaling the sweet perfume of undisclosed virtues; instead of leading an obscure life, identified indeed with God's interests and working out His plans, but doing so in the quiet vales of simplicity, as her humble spirit always ambitioned, we find her, even through adverse circumstances, continually kept before the public eye. Providence ordained her to be a light set upon the mountain, whose brilliancy would be a guide to

future generations—the same light that had been a beam of splendor in her youth to the home circle and was to be in her maturer years the radiant example of the perfect Religious.

After proving His chosen one, the same benign Providence re-established her reputation, that the good cause might not suffer from the loss of her influence. We learn this from a letter of Bishop de Lesquin, written in January, 1838:

It is a great satisfaction for me to learn that justice and truth have attained the ascendency. I try to think that it was in a moment of vertigo your unfortunate accuser was led to tell *fables* that have not even the shadow of probability. You owe me no thanks for having stated facts.

God has permitted this trial in order to make you more like His divine Son—to nail you to the cross with Him. We all have debts to pay. An excellent means of freeing ourselves from them is to pass now in this life through the crucible of tribulation. If they had been left to your own choice it is to be presumed that they would not have been of this nature. God is a skilful physician who knows what is best for each one of us. He sometimes inflicts very deep wounds upon us, but those of His divine Son were deeper.

A notable result of Sister Theodore's influence and mediatory power was the parish church of Soulaines, which stands as a monument of her sojourn in that humble village. The principal personage of the place was Monsieur de la Bertaudière, the last of his name. The chief part of the family estate had been confiscated during the French Revolution. What he then

possessed was only a remnant rescued by a faithful servant while M. de la Bertaudière was in exile. Of itself it was a handsome fortune, though very small compared with the estates which his noble ancestors had possessed for many generations.

The great need of the place at this time was a suitable church, the old edifice being so dilapidated that it was unfit for the celebration of the divine mysteries. The inhabitants realized this, but they were too poor to build another. All hopes rested on "Monsieur," the name by which M. de la Bertaudière was known among them. He possessed the means and the goodwill likewise; but a disagreement in reference to the plans caused him to withdraw entirely from the undertaking and to refuse any help. This was a great disappointment to the entire congregation who could not relinquish their hopes of having a new church. The question now was how to prevail on "Monsieur" to change his mind. The curé went to see Sister Theodore, to whom he unfolded his plan, which was that she would intercede for them with M. de la Bertaudière. She heard the proposal with great surprise, and opposed strong objections, maintaining the impropriety, in general, of a Religious mingling in such affairs. It was out of her sphere; besides, what could a poor simple nun do in so important a matter? Her excuses were unavailing; she was urged all the more, for the curé knew the high esteem in which she was held by M. de la Bertaudière and her influence with him. After long deliberation she decided to make the attempt. For a considerable time "Monsieur" was cold and imperturbable, giving evasive answers with seeming indifference.

It was discouraging; but Sister Theodore persevered, invoking his angel and appealing with her characteristic ardor and eloquence, until he confessed himself vanquished and promised to erect the church at his own expense.

When Sister Theodore left Soulaines in the spring of the same year the building was in progress; and when she returned after an absence of three years she had the satisfaction of seeing it completed. "It is a gem of great beauty," she writes; "the altar is of different colors of the finest marble, which contrast and harmonize beautifully. Not only the sanctuary but the entire church is elegantly finished, and the gilding is so rich and profuse that it presents a dazzling splendor."

Sister Theodore's name is mentioned in the manuscript placed in the corner-stone, to commemorate the influence she exerted in behalf of the grateful parish of Soulaines.

This, however, was not the only benefit she procured for those poor people; her labors for the past six years bore abundant fruit in their souls, and they gave her their unreserved confidence. Their grateful affection was as lasting as it was ardent; and Sister Theodore reciprocated their devotedness, ever afterwards retaining a very warm spot in her heart for those "poor dear people of Soulaines."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIANA FOUNDATION.—BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE AT RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR.—VOLUNTEERS FOR THE FOREIGN MISSION.—SISTER THEODORE APPOINTED SUPERIOR.

The events narrated in the foregoing chapters have brought us to the year 1839, and to the occasion of a visit to Ruillé-sur-Loir by the Rt. Rev. Celestine de la Hailandière, Bishop of the diocese of Vincennes, in the State of Indiana, U. S. A.

The Bishop's object in honoring Ruillé with his presence was to engage Sisters for his diocese. He had been sent the previous year to France, in the interests of the Indiana missions, by his venerated predecessor in the see of Vincennes, the saintly Bishop Bruté. The Bishop's death occurring soon after his Vicar-General's departure, the burden of the episcopate fell to Mgr. de la Hailandière. Bishop Alerding, in his "History of the Diocese of Vincennes," says: "Whilst engaged in this work and when momentarily in Paris, he (Mgr. de la Hailandière) heard of the death of Bishop Bruté, and also heard the news of his appointment as coadjutor with the right of succession. By a bull of Gregory XVI. dated May 17, 1839, he had been preconized Bishop of Axiern. The death of Dr.

Bruté happening so soon, he found himself to be his successor before his consecration as bishop.

"It was in the chapel of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Paris that he was consecrated by Mgr. Forbin-Janson, assisted by the Bishop of Versailles, Blanquet de Bailleul, and Mgr. Le Mercier, Bishop of Beauvais, on the same day and at the same time with Mgr. Morlot, who died Archbishop of Paris and Cardinal."

The newly consecrated Bishop, though not a native of Rennes, had lived in that city up to the time of his departure from France in 1836. It was there that he became aware of the work in which the Sisters of Providence were engaged, there that he made acquaintance with Sister Theodore. He now applied to Mother Mary at Ruillé-sur-Loir for Sisters to establish a house in Indiana. Mother Mary never had a thought of extending her Community beyond the confines of France; yet in so many singular ways had the divine will revealed itself in respect to her Congregation, she thought it not improbable that this new appeal was another manifestation of the providence of God directing all things to their good, as well as to His greater glory. *Was this God's will?* It is in trying to penetrate the mysteries of His veiled purposes that noble souls reveal themselves; then is to be seen how much holy indifference, zeal, and strength of purpose can be pitted against the totality of perplexing doubts, embarrassments, vexations, troubles, sufferings—everything that is calculated to weigh heavily in the balance against self-interest.

Mother Mary replied to the Bishop that the matter would be proposed to the Community soon to assemble

for the annual retreat; she further stated that she knew but one person capable of undertaking the foundation. That "one person" was Sister Theodore. The question was proposed to the Chapter of the Congregation, which regarded it favorably. The Sisters in general were then informed of the Bishop's request and asked if there were any volunteers. Mother Mary carefully refrained from intimating her preferences, knowing that the Sisters would acquiesce at once, actuated by the spirit of obedience, and she wanted them to be entirely free. There were many volunteers, but Sister Theodore was not among the number; not that she was unwilling to sacrifice home and country, she deemed herself unworthy of so great a work. The suggestion was finally made to her, not by Mother Mary, however; still it was only after long consideration and longer prayer that she signified her readiness to undertake the foundation of a house in the New World. The Bishop of Vincennes was apprised promptly of her decision, and Sister Theodore returned to Soulaines to await the time of departure. That year was one of very great trial to the foundress-elect. Was it nothing to quit forever the land of her birth, to leave all that the poor human heart holds dear? What her true feelings were when the time of departure came may be gathered from a fragment of one of her letters: "That day [July 12, 1840] was for us like a funeral day. O Mother, O Sisters, O Country, how much it has cost us to leave you!"

Besides the breaking of natural ties, there was a further trial for the leader of that heroic band. To take upon herself the cares of a new foundation was no light

matter. If she could have expected to be relieved after a few years, the prospect would have been less gloomy; but she understood perfectly the import of Mother Mary's final letter to her concerning the new mission. It read as follows:

RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR [SARTHE], June 16, 1840.

MY DEAR SISTER THEODORE:

It is from Ruillé that I bid you farewell, for it is very probable that I shall be deprived of the consolation of embracing you at your departure, which has just been set by us, conjointly with our venerable prelate, Bishop Bouvier, for the 16th of July. Consequently you may repair to Ruillé to make preparation for this long voyage which, most probably, will separate us for the remainder of our lives; we shall see each other only in the bosom of our God, who has gained an everlasting kingdom for us by His precious blood. My hand trembles, my dear daughter, my heart throbs, and my tears are abundant while writing this to you, which perhaps shall be the last, so that I wish these words to make as much impression on you as they do on me; for notwithstanding the war that I have constantly waged against your self-love with the desire of utterly destroying it, God is my witness that I have ever loved you with a mother's heart, and that I shall always love you whether you be in Vincennes or in China—everywhere my love will follow you, even to heaven or to purgatory. Go, then, my dear daughter, with the assurance of this sincere and cordial friendship, with the best wishes and benedictions that I can make or invoke upon you; in a word, my dear Sister Theodore, may God alone be the object of all your undertakings and the end of all your actions; only think of us for the love of Him.

Now, my dear child, notwithstanding your representa-

tions, it is decided that *you* will conduct the Sisters to Vincennes, that you will be the Superior of the Mother House which is to be founded there, and the Superior General of all the other houses which shall there be established later on, until the two prelates of Mans and Vincennes shall otherwise ordain. This is the way we wish to commence this work for the greater honor and glory of God, in order not to tempt Providence, nor on the other hand to distrust His goodness. In concert with our learned and worthy Bishop, we have determined to send at present only three of our Sisters—you, Sister St. Vincent Ferrer, and Sister Dominique, with two novices and one lay Sister. We have thought, considering the poverty of the diocese of Vincennes, of the Bishop and of his clergy, who live but on alms, that it was necessary to proceed with prudence in order not to overburden them. You will begin by settling down in the dwelling destined for you, which, however, is not yet finished; there you will judge of your needs, of the good that can be done, of the assistance that you ought to have. You are to open a school amongst a small Congregation of Catholics. Sister Dominique will visit the sick, and next summer Ruillé engages itself to send you more help if necessary. One of your novices is a beautiful writer, the other a fine seamstress, both very good persons. . . .

Bishop Bouvier says he can determine nothing at present in regard to the agreement to be made between Bishop de la Hailandière and himself; you will have to see how matters stand before anything can be concluded; however, the Bishop of Vincennes is to pay the expenses of the voyage. He besought us to advance you the money as far as New York. There you will find reimbursement at his agent's; a priest sent there to meet you will direct the remainder of the journey. The money you will have

spent will be refunded to you; but we substitute you creditor instead of the Congregation (at Ruillé) and you will apply this money to your own wants and those of your Sisters. Thus the Bishop's indebtedness will be to you in place of to the Congregation, which hereby surrenders all claim.

Adieu, my dear daughter, Sister Theodore. May the grace and peace of Our Lord be with you everywhere and in all things.

Your friend and Mother,

SISTER MARY, Sup. Gen'l.

To this tender and motherly letter we subjoin these notes of information obtained by Mother Mary for the voyagers:

Correspondents of Mgr. de la Hailandière, Bishop of Vincennes:

At Havre—M. J. B. Le Gros, merchant, and M. Franque, who will prepare everything for the voyage, make the contracts, receive the baggage, etc.

The Ladies of St. Thomas at the Hospital, who will provide board and lodging.

At New York—M. Louis Gayot (102 Leonard Street), all kindness and attention, who will render every possible service.

At Philadelphia—Rev. M. Frenaye, an intimate friend of Mgr. de la Hailandière, who will receive the Sisters and direct them to Vincennes. He lives at the Bishop's residence, St. John's, Thirteenth Street.

This, my dear Sister, is all the information I can give you. Take exact account of all, and note down during your journey whatever may be useful to guide those who go to join you in your new world. Forward the infor-

mation you will have obtained to the Superiors of the Congregation, that they may have the means of being useful to you.

Adieu, my dear daughter, may Jesus our Saviour bless you! May His holy Mother take you under her protection! May the angels guide and direct you!

Sister Theodore finding herself burdened with the superiorship of the Sisters of Providence in America, and fearing that the cause might suffer from her inefficiency, expresses her anxiety to her good father, Mgr. Bouvier, who deigns thus paternally to respond:

LE MANS, July 1, 1840.

The sentiments that you express, my dear daughter, are not unfounded. If you should rely on your dignity and capacity you would not be a proper instrument for the works of God. When Our Lord founded the ministry, to which you must be associated more than you are now by your first vocation,* He did not choose for His apostles the powerful ones of the earth, nor learned men; but He selected humble fishermen, in order that the divine power might be more strikingly manifested. He always acts in the same manner. He confounds the proud and exalts the humble. Let us consider ourselves as nothing; nevertheless, let us be ready for everything. If we are left aside as worthless we shall not murmur; if we are

* Religious are, by their vocation, associated with the apostolic ministry, either by actively aiding in propagating the faith, or by their prayers and penitential works obtaining grace for those who have embraced a missionary career. Mother Theodore, being destined to establish a foreign mission and to form hearts that would share in and perpetuate the work of the apostolate, was more intimately associated with God's work than she would have been simply by her religious vocation.

employed in great things we shall not glory in them any more than the chisel which is used to make a beautiful statue.

Since you have been chosen for the foundation in question, think of nothing but of preparing yourself in the best manner you are able, and bring to it a very good will. Great interests will lie in your hands; fear to compromise them; hence rely continually on help from above.

Receive, my dear daughter, the assurance of my tender and paternal affection in Jesus Christ.

✝ J. B., Bp. of Mans.

Mother Mary, as we have said, left the Sisters free to accept or decline according to their pleasure. It was not *a case of obedience*, and in proposing the mission she presented the strongest picture possible, under the light of her inexperience in this particular case, of the difficulties that certainly *would*, and those that most probably *might*, be encountered in their new home. She referred to this freedom of choice in her first letter to her beloved children in Indiana, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

Sister Theodore repaired from Soulaines to Ruillé-sur-Loir early in July, eager to consummate her sacrifice. Salvation of souls is always the ambition of zealous hearts, since the price of one alone was the precious blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This one object is the germ of the world's civilization. For this have homes been forsaken and lives exposed. For this have seas been crossed, and mountains. It is the one end set forth in the Rules of the Sisters of Providence—the all-embracing end—"for what is their aim in the services they render their neighbor if it be not to gain

souls to God and make His love reign in the hearts of men?" This sublime motive engenders zeal, and zeal thus stimulated presses on to the goal.

And then, in the blessed assurance that

> "Providence for us high, infinite,
> Makes our necessities its watchful task,"

lies the secret of that courage and hope which have inspired the apostolic ministry in all ages; therein is found the grace of persevering charity despite the difficulties and the delays, delays which prove that

> "Providence denies because it would have us ask,"

or rather

> "Seems but to deny, and in denying grants."

Whatever may have been Mother Mary's reasons for not expecting to bid the Sisters farewell at Ruillé, they were not asked to make the sacrifice. The retreat held at Rennes for the Sisters in Brittany and the other northern parts was postponed to the end of July, thus affording Mother Mary the happiness of spending the last few days with her Vincennes Sisters and personally attending to all their wants.

## CHAPTER VIII.

PREPARATIONS IN INDIANA TO RECEIVE THE RELIGIOUS.—LETTERS OF BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE TO SISTER THEODORE.—HER DESIRE TO BEGIN THE WORK OF THE MISSION.—LETTER TO HER SISTER, MADAME LETOUZÉ.—FINAL PREPARATIONS AT RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR.—DEPARTURE OF THE SISTERS FOR VINCENNES.—CANON LOTTIN.—THE COUNTESS OF MARESCA.—LADIES OF ST. THOMAS AT HAVRE.—THE ASSOCIATE FOUNDRESSES.

It was a great happiness for the newly consecrated Bishop on his return to Vincennes to be able to declare to his flock that a Religious Community would soon be located in the diocese. The good people were equally rejoiced.

The Bishop began at once to make preparations for the arrival of the Sisters. A tract of land was purchased about fifty miles north of Vincennes where there was a small settlement of Catholic families, chiefly French, and a brick building was commenced, intended to be a dwelling for the Sisters. This intention was changed later upon finding that the building could not be ready at the time of the Sisters' arrival.

Whatever may have been the doubts and anxieties that Sister Theodore experienced relative to her prospective work in America, her soul was strengthened and her zeal inflamed by the letters of Bishop de la Hail-

andière which she received during this year of waiting. December 17, 1839, he writes:

It was only on my arrival at Vincennes that I received your excellent letter. One hundred and fifty others were on my desk awaiting me; yours was read among the first, to the great satisfaction of the clergy, who were particularly gratified at the prospect of seeing you soon. . . . I addressed a long letter to the Superior General of Ruillé-sur-Loir, endeavoring to answer in advance some of the questions that might be proposed. Our candidates were also spoken of. Some of those I expected have not presented themselves, I hear; others could not be received. In all this I have only to bless Providence, which has been so favorable until now that I should be very guilty did I not abandon myself entirely to its guidance. I urged above all that your colony should be sent early in the spring. You are so anxiously awaited, the need of Sisters here is so very great—these and other reasons for your early departure I have detailed to the Mother Superior.

Mlle. Irma Le Fer de la Motte is now at Ruillé, I suppose. How happy she will be to have you for Superior! I believe she will be an admirable Religious; she is endowed with a great spirit of sacrifice.

The young lady here mentioned, who impressed the Bishop of Vincennes so favorably, and who pledged herself to the Indiana mission, will be known to us later as Sister St. Francis Xavier. Her name will be met with frequently during the course of this narrative; it suffices to say in passing, that she realized all the hopes of her Superiors and spiritual guides, and died in the odor of sanctity at St. Mary-of-the-Woods

in 1856. It was presumably to Mlle. Le Fer de la Motte that Sister Theodore addressed these lines:

How happy we shall be to consummate the sacrifice that our divine Lord deigns to ask of us! I say He *deigns* to ask us to make this sacrifice, for He will not oblige us to receive His favors, His honors. Yes, it is a great honor to be chosen for the grand work of kindling the light of faith in a country where His adorable name is scarcely heard. Oh, let us forever praise and exalt the providence of God! Many there who claim to be Catholics do not know how to make the sign of the cross, it is said; much less do they know the *Our Father* or the *Hail Mary;* and some do not even know that God created them. Oh! we shall be happy in aiding to dispel such ignorance, happy in making Him known and served; and we shall love Him more and more, seeing there are so many who do not love Him. Let us prepare ourselves by fervent prayers and many mortifications to obtain from the Sacred Heart of Jesus those graces that will cause our work to be fruitful for souls; for what are we of ourselves?

The fragment of a letter that is next presented seems to have been written to one of the Superiors in France; in it Sister Theodore says:

I thank you all for your good prayers. Your counsels shall be my guide in all these matters of which you know the difficulty better than I can tell it. May the providence of God be blessed! Again my soul is in peace, and I long for the Cross that Jesus holds out to me. When I think of my future, the work for souls in the far-away and wild country, I wish to fly to it. But, ah! my miseries! Pray for me that my sins and deficiencies be not a hindrance to God's work. I kiss my crucifix and bathe it

with tears, entreating Him who for mankind was slain to water with His precious blood the soil of hearts which the Sisters of Providence must bring as conquests of His love.

In a letter to Madame Letouzé, her sister, she spoke of the mission for which she had been chosen, saying:

It was the dream of my childhood and youth to labor in a special way for the salvation of souls; but little did I then think I was destined for America. I thought of China and Russia, and would have gladly gone to either had Providence so decreed. But may His adorable will be done! And do not be grieved, my dear Marie, if I say that I can no longer feel satisfied at home. I must get at the work awaiting me at Vincennes. I long for the time to come, and yet my heart will all but break, for I love you all, my dear Ruillé, my beloved France; yes, I love you all—but I must go; it is God's will. Pray always for me and for those who are to share my grand destiny.

When it became known that the Sisters of Providence contemplated founding an establishment in America there was considerable interest manifested. Several Bishops and prominent clergymen promised to use their influence in procuring subjects for the new establishment, and persons of means were solicited to aid in the great work of charity. But this display of enthusiasm seems not to have lasted long. After a few months Sister Theodore wrote to the Bishop of Vincennes telling him of various disappointments. Her letter received this reply:

Yesterday on my return from a country journey I found your letter of January ninth [1840] which greatly

affected me. What I feared so much has happened—people are becoming cold in regard to our mission; on the other hand, your devotedness increases, and that gives me much joy in Our Lord, so that, notwithstanding the pain, hope remains stronger than fear. Busy hands have begun work in the house in which you are to live, but the chapel that was to have been yours has burned down. It is very unfortunate. You will not be without one, however; a priest is seeing to everything there for you. The Academy building will be elegant and suitable. We are also preparing novices for you; if you come in the spring you will gather in a large number before the end of the year; but if you delay too long the patience of several may give way and they will go elsewhere. Oh, if you did but know how anxiously you are awaited here! What a misfortune if you should not come! No, God will not permit it. Up to this hour He has been so good to us. . . . Try to bring, besides the Religious that will be assigned, some other young persons of your own choice; especially Mlle. Le Fer de la Motte, whom I desire much to have, and of whose vocation I have no doubt; it has been examined by very able men. I have asked of Madame, the Superior General, a Sister who understands pharmacy; also a musician, and two Sisters who will be able to teach what is usually taught in the good schools of France. As to temporal affairs, do not be uneasy. Many pains at first, crosses of all sorts, perhaps; certainly many privations await you in the beginning; moreover, there will be the difficulty of acquiring the English language, which is really necessary for you to master. With courage and the spirit of sacrifice the difficulties will disappear. Pray, respected Sister, pray much; our mission is henceforth yours. I will pray for you without failing, and our hearts shall meet in Our Lord.

Accept the expression of esteem and affection which God gives me for you.

✝ CELESTINE, Bp. of Vincennes.

While preparations were in progress in the New World, Ruillé was busy also, making arrangements and doing what it could for the new foundation. In the meantime the Superiors were harassed in various ways, owing to the choice of Sisters for the foreign mission. We can only conjecture how successful they were in their work of reconciling friends to the loss they were about to sustain, and what response they must have given to letters like the following, addressed to Sister St. Charles, First Assistant Superior, by Dr. Lecacheur, who sent a copy of his letter to the Bishop of Mans:

BRISSAC [SOULAINES], July 2, 1840.

Only yesterday a book of medical science reached me which our excellent Sister Theodore returned. She took occasion to bid me farewell, saying that she had been chosen to go to America. I was so astonished; it seemed like hearing of a friend condemned to death. If I were in need of any excuse for writing these lines, I should easily find it in my profound regret, the same which is felt in general in this place. But no; I owe it to a more imperative sentiment, I owe it to my duty to break the silence which I cannot keep a single moment longer without doing wrong. Were I not to speak, my profession places me in the position of a man who, standing on the brink of a precipice, would see a blind man going toward it without warning him of the danger. I do not fear to maintain this comparison; it is just in every respect.

He then goes into detail about Sister Theodore's weakly constitution, the fatigues of the long journey,

which he thinks will surely kill her, and the hardships that are likely to be endured in making the foundation should she survive the journey.

It must have been a heart-rending time for the worthy Superiors, who realized fully the obligations their office imposed of acting with prudence and consideration. They were not incredulous either as to the state of Sister Theodore's health; her life all along had been almost a miracle. Yet they knew, what the honorable physician did not know, that God often accords special graces, a substitute for health, which enable the possessor to achieve greater things for His honor and glory than others accomplish who do not have to contend against bodily infirmities. Can we recall any among the saints whose lives we have read, who, while carrying on stupendous works and sustaining prodigious labors for the salvation of souls, did not endure bodily sufferings continually? Abandoned to God's interests, they left to Him their corporal welfare, illustrating in their lives this doctrine of the Rev. J. B. Caussade, S.J.:

"The languor and impotence of faithful souls are but illusions and semblances which they must courageously face. God sends them and permits them to exercise their faith and self-abandonment, and in these virtues lies the soul's true remedies. She must go on courageously, utterly ignoring her infirmities, accepting all that comes to her, to do or suffer in the order of God, never hesitating to treat her body as we do those beasts of burden only destined to spend their lives going hither and thither at our will. This treatment is more efficacious than all that delicate

care which only weakens the vigor of the mind. This strength of purpose has an indescribable virtue and power to sustain a feeble body, and a year of this noble and generous life is worth a century of fears and care."

Sister Theodore was in her ordinary state of health, the future she would leave to God's sweet providence.

The Sisters destined to be her companions returned to the mother house at Ruillé-sur-Loir early in the summer. Everything being in readiness, they bade farewell to the Community on the 12th of July, 1840, and set out for Mans to receive the Bishop's blessing. Their diary says:

"This, the first night of our journey, seemed very long; it ended, however, and at the dawn of day we found ourselves in the city of Mans. We saw it without seeing it. We alighted dreamily from the carriage and went to the house of our Sisters, who lavished attentions upon us with touching affection. Letters were awaiting us there from Rennes and Soulaines containing most tender farewells." On the margin Sister Theodore wrote: "Good Cross, I bless you, O faithful Cross, be my strength." Her diary continues: "How much we owe to Canon Lottin for his extreme goodness towards us! He was like a father, showing us the most sincere devotedness. Owing to our inexperience in travelling, we should have made many a blunder had it not been for his wise counsels. His generosity culminated in his presenting to us a precious particle of the holy cross of Jesus Christ, which has been our safeguard, and which will continue to be such through the mercy of Him who died upon it. May this venerable Father again receive the expression of

our unceasing gratitude, and know that his goodness is not forgotten. I seem yet to perceive the joy that illumined his countenance when we spoke to him of the almost miraculous intervention of divine Providence in our regard, and especially when he heard of the generosity of Madame la Comptesse de Maresca; but then there followed an expression of deep sadness as Canon Lottin spoke of our future, the horizon of which appeared so cloudy to him. 'You have given yourselves to a great work. May God be with you,' he said. To this we heartily responded 'Amen.' Then fixing his eyes directly upon me he said: 'But you will have to suffer much.' I could only reply, 'God's holy will be done!' Then slowly, and in a voice of sweet tenderness, Canon Lottin added: 'With the Cross and in the Cross and through the Cross thou shalt conquer.' How my heart throbbed at these words! How it dilated with love and holy desires to embrace the crosses that were to be mine! . . . On the 16th [of July], Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Canon Lottin was at the Cathedral at four o'clock in the morning to celebrate the holy mysteries and to give us the holy communion, our viaticum, that we might be aided from on high during our perilous journey. Then, having received the blessing of this good and holy priest, we took the coach for Havre, accompanied by our faithful friends, M. and Mme. Marie of Soulaines.

"At Honfleur we had our first sight of the sea. On beholding it I nearly fainted. My eyes were covered with a mist, there was a ringing in my ears and my whole body trembled. I do not know what caused me to experience this singular sensation—I who had

spent all my youth on the shore. My companions perceived my emotion and were exceedingly tender and attentive. The dear Sisters! Had they not hearts as well as I? My weakness seemed to give them more courage, and they did everything they could to cheer me. How I thanked God for giving me the example of their beautiful, brave lives! . . . During the passage to Havre I was somewhat sea-sick; this was only a forerunner of something worse, the forty days of suffering that separated me from the New World."

As was often the case in those days of stage-coaches and sailing-vessels, there were many annoyances and delays in the journey. At Havre they learned that the ship on which they were to take passage would not leave for several days. This disappointment was but another occasion of experiencing the providence of God; for a Religious from the House of Mercy in Havre happened to be on the boat from Honfleur; she invited them to her institution, where they remained until their departure for America. The goodness of those Ladies of St. Thomas by whom the Mercy House was conducted is held in continual remembrance by the Sisters of Providence, and their Community is included among the benefactors of the Congregation.

While Sister Theodore and her companions were awaiting the vessel's departure, it occurred to some of them to open a box that had been sent by the Countess of Maresca. As it was marked "Confections," some proposed giving it away unopened. "What need have we of this?" they said. But others insisted on opening the box and found to their surprise a sum of gold concealed among orange-leaves that doubled the amount

their purse contained. "Truly we are Sisters of Providence!" they exclaimed. "How shall we praise and bless the name of the Lord!" Before they had recovered from their surprise this note from the Countess arrived:

Monday, July 21, 1840.

The haste with which I was obliged to forward the box of refreshments caused me to forget in the message that announced it a reference to its contents. Open it before having it put on board and take out a little money intended to relieve the penury with which your prospective establishment is threatened. Think of me, good Sister Theodore, in the far-off country; pray for my happiness in eternity. It is not enough that one have a good heart to obtain that greatest of graces; still I have little else to my credit. Rest assured of my constant remembrance and of my friendship. I have been here at your mother house since yesterday. All are occupied about you, anxious and doubly prayerful for your safety. I should do wrong not to tell you so. Assure your intrepid companions of my good wishes. May God sustain you all.

Circumstances did not permit Mother Mary, the Superior General, to carry out all her plans as stated in her letters to Sister Theodore, previously quoted. The illness of Sister Dominique caused Sister Basilide to be substituted. Sister Olympiade was added to the number at the suggestion of the Bishop of Mans, to whom she appealed for the favor. "The intrepid companions" that were then given to the foundress for her establishment in Indiana were Sister St. Vincent Ferrer, Sister Basilide, Sister Olympiade, Sister Mary Xavier, and Sister Mary Liguori. Much that is interesting and edifying might be related of this heroic band did not our limits confine us to a mere

mention of them; their names, however, will frequently occur in the course of this narrative, which will show that *the house of the Lord is built not with stones wrought by the hands of men, but rather with the living stones of human hearts formed and fashioned by His will.*

## CHAPTER IX.

LEAVING FRANCE.—ROBBED ON SHIP.—OTHER INCIDENTS.—ARRIVAL AT NEW YORK.—DOCTOR DOANE.—FATHER VARELA.—MADAME PARMENTIER.—MR. J. BEYERLY.—BISHOP CONWELL OF PHILADELPHIA.—THE SISTERS OF CHARITY.—THE SULPICIANS.—FATHER CHARTIER.

Although the Sisters took advantage of a passing vessel to send letters back to France, and upon their arrival despatched the glad tidings that they were again on *terra firma*, the journal of all their happenings at sea, with the most interesting addition of their overland experiences, appeared at a later date. Mother Theodore in this record gives repeated proofs of her great soul, so tender, yet so courageous, and the entire narrative is delightful, inspiring, and deeply edifying.

As the limits of this volume necessarily exclude many items of merely local interest, a few leaves from her journal must suffice:

How difficult it would be for me to describe what passed in my soul when I felt the vessel moving and I was leaving France. The dwellings appeared to fly from us. Fort Francis I. was the last object we beheld; it also disappeared in its time and we were on the great sea. The sails were extended one after the other, swelled by the wind and hurrying us away from our beloved France. I

kissed my crucifix. *It* would remain with me to teach me that the life of a Christian, and especially of a Religious, must be a life of privations and sacrifice.

I will not undertake to tell you what was going on aboard the vessel. Sad and leaning against the cordage I was contemplating the shore of my country, flying from me with inconceivable rapidity, and becoming smaller at every moment, till it seemed but a streak above the horizon. All was commotion and noise on deck; but, absorbed in our reflections, we neither saw nor heard anything that was going on around us. I thought of you all —shall I say it? Oh! no, God alone knows all. Suddenly a word of adieu struck my ear and drew me from my revery. It was from the perfidious passport officer and his associate, the carpenter of the vessel, who were escaping in a rowboat, having through pretended kindness deceived and robbed us of a considerable amount. Other passengers suffered the same misfortune, but the robbery was not detected in time to capture the rogues. Then indeed we could say, *My God and my all!*

The third night out we were awakened by cries of "Thieves! thieves!" The noise was below and did not last long. The next day while dining at the captain's table, what was our surprise to see him bring up three horrible-looking wretches who proved to be the thieves of whom we had heard in the night. These half-naked men were robbers that had escaped from the prison at Havre and hid themselves in the hold of the vessel. By prowling around at night they hoped to get some food, but not succeeding and pressed by hunger, they were obliged to give themselves up. What a sight! I kept offering the precious blood of Our Lord's five wounds to the eternal Father for their conversion and in reparation for the wickedness of the world. How odious sin ap-

peared as I gazed upon those miserable men! They stood trembling before the captain, who must have threatened to throw them into the sea, and they crouched at his feet with such a supplicating look that one could not but pity them. He did not intend, however, to dispose of them in that manner, but ordered that they be given some food. They began to eat so ravenously that it was evident they were nearly famished. He then put them to work at once, to satisfy the passengers who were not pleased with this show of mercy.

The Sisters suffered much from sea-sickness, but none so long or so severely as Sister Theodore. She was not well a single hour on sea. On the ninth day of the voyage the sea became very rough. All the night following they feared shipwreck. Sister Theodore says of this anxious time:

At last the fearful night gave place to the day. It was the 6th of August, Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord on Mount Thabor; but it was not to lead us to Thabor that this day was given us, for the tempest continued to rage till evening. At length the heavy sea subsided and the greatest calm ensued. But during the storm we had made great headway. Thus it is with tribulations; they bring us nearer heaven, the desired term of our pilgrimage. How often did we not repeat the words of our Litany that night and day—Providence of God, calm in the tempest! Providence of God, our guide that we may avoid every danger! We prayed then as we had never prayed before. Truly a storm at sea teaches one how to pray. . . .

Oh if you could imagine our loneliness the first Sunday at sea! Like the Prodigal Son, we also said: "The servants in our Father's house have bread in abundance, and we are dying of hunger." Yes, we hungered for the

food of our souls. I read the Ordinary of the Mass aloud; we united our intention with that of the priests who were celebrating the divine mysteries, and with the faithful who were having the happiness to assist at the holy sacrifice. With what earnestness we prayed to share in the benefits of the holy mysteries! There, in another atmosphere, farther from earth and nearer to heaven, our souls were united to God by recollection more easily, and we prayed most fervently for all our dear friends, not knowing the value of true friendship until we were deprived of its blessedness. . . .

On the 15th of August, Feast of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven, they had another lonely day, if any one may be singled out among forty days of a sea voyage. The journal relates:

Instead of the sound of merry bells, we had the low murmur of the waves as they dashed against our ship; for the chants of the church we heard only the rough voices of the sailors or the cries of the children on the lower deck. But we had made the sacrifice, so, in union with Mary Immaculate, we addressed our petitions to God, uniting ourselves to our brethren who, more fortunate than we, were singing canticles to the Lord in His holy temples.

The captain was unremitting in kind attention and granted us all possible liberty. His room was at our command all day, and whenever we assembled, passengers and crew alike respected our desire for retirement and showed the greatest deference. During our prayers they often listened and seemed to join, in spirit at least. Some were so deeply moved that they tried to speak to us afterwards, and asked to learn some of the prayers. We could

not speak enough English to do them any good; prayer and example had to supply for our words.

The beauties of nature always appealed to Sister Theodore's heart.

I passed my days [she says] looking out upon the sea, the clouds, the ships that passed by, and examining the fish. The aspect of the heavens is much more diversified on sea than on land. Oftentimes the deep was calm like an immense mirror upon which the sky was perfectly reflected. A spray from the waves lit up by the rays of the sun displayed, as it were, thousands of pearls and all kinds of precious stones which seemed to frolic over vast areas of water. The effect is charming, indescribable. How grand, and what a religious pensiveness seizes the soul on beholding the ocean above and the ocean below—symbol of God's eternity! And the magnificent setting sun which found me every evening at the same spot, like a faithful courtier, how shall I describe the ravishing spectacle! That pure sky, and that majestic sun descending so proudly into the waters as if to refresh itself; that luminous ray darting from it and reaching even to us, gilding the waves lightly stirred by the evening breeze; large fish swaying between wind and wave joyously bounding about, adding still to the beauty of the spectacle already so imposing—often have I witnessed it, but it is always a new pleasure, and I must say that it inspires a delightful sentiment of love toward the author of these wonders. I felt so happy in belonging to Him, and I asked myself, "What will our good God be in our true country, since even in our exile He is so great, so powerful, so magnificent?"

The sixteenth was remarkable for its incidents (it takes so little on a vessel to interest one); the first was a fire,

caused by the imprudence of a sailor who, in smoking, had let the contents of his pipe fall on his bed. Happily the fire was discovered before it had done further damage than that of destroying the mattress and hammock. The second event was more tragical. The billows were covered with blood, and death claimed another victim. But do not be alarmed; it was only a fish caught with a harpoon. It was a sea-hog of extraordinary size; six vigorous sailors could scarcely draw it aboard. Its flesh furnished food to all the crew for eight days. We ate of it and found it very palatable. The sea-hog very nearly resembles the earthly animal, while its flesh has exactly the same taste. On another day a monstrous whale followed us. It sent up columns of water and dashed about so furiously that had a vessel been in its track it certainly would have capsized. . . .

We were skirting the banks of Newfoundland on the twenty-fourth day, when good St. Bartholomew sent us a storm as an anniversary token of the final decision regarding America. Poor Sister St. Vincent was very ill, but pious and resigned, as she always is. She edified us very much by the simplicity of her faith, and, in fact, by all the virtues of a good Religious. All suffered in body, heart, and mind. Everything in us seemed the subject of change, except charity, which united us in God. All love one another tenderly, and this consolation is well calculated to support us under the pains we suffer and those we shall yet have to endure.

Our fifth Sunday at sea. . . . The weather serene and the ocean smooth as glass. This happened each successive Sunday, which seemed to us quite singular. It appeared that God wished to typify the Christian's day of rest by that of nature's repose; and the more striking thing was that on Monday the wind always recommenced

with renewed energy. We used to say to one another: "We shall see to-morrow whether it will be rough;" and the morrow never failed to awaken the Storm King in the caverns of the deep. The first display of his fury seemed the most frightful to all the passengers below—we were the only ones on the upper deck—screams and lamentations were heard everywhere; and a rabbi, particularly, was nearly beside himself. While this was transpiring on the lower deck we were above contemplating all that surrounded us, calm and resigned to whatever Our Lord should ordain. When the rabbi had recovered a little from his fright he came up to us and was astonished to find us so calm. I told him we had asked pardon of God from the bottom of our hearts, and that we hoped to obtain it through the precious blood of Our Lord and the merits of His holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. He answered not a word; evidently he was not consoled by the motives of faith and trust in God's sweet providence, which sustained and gave us such peace in the midst of universal fear and consternation. . . .

September 5th. In sight of land. "Behold, we have arrived!" we said one to the other; "the perils of the sea are passed." We threw ourselves upon our knees and, with hearts full of gratitude, we offered our thanks to God for all His tender mercies to us, mercies bestowed in so special a manner. We prayed to Him also for our future; we could not prevent some feeling of anxiety about it. . . . The ship ceased to move. What joy for the Americans! They were going to see again those that were dear to them. They were expected. The telegraph in announcing the arrival of the *Cincinnati* had caused many a heart to throb; but not one was anxious about us, not one was beating for us. "Behold houses," we said, "but not our Providence home. Behold peo-

ple, but not our Sisters. We shall not meet with friendly faces and devoted hearts as we set foot on this, to us, foreign land." How greatly we were mistaken. The Custom-house officer received us with marked respect, and a very kind gentleman, Dr. Sydney A. Doane by name, the investigating physician, greeted us most cordially, even returning later with a basket of refreshments and some milk. He told his attendants that it would be a blessing to any one to render us the least service. Little did we expect such attention from a stranger. How we shall pray for him—good Dr. Doane! Without him what should have become of us in New York? It was he who informed the Bishop of our arrival—for the deputy of Bishop de la Hailandière failed to appear—and those first consoling words addressed to us in the New World, so new to us, we shall never forget. "Soon," said the doctor, "you will be surrounded by numerous friends who will be happy to see you. The Bishop of New York will be much pleased to make your acquaintance. You will find in his Vicar-General a real father; he is a Spanish priest who speaks French, and an excellent man whose life is entirely taken up in doing good." . . . It rained all day, and the sea was very rough. It was Saturday; should we be obliged to spend another Sunday on ship? About three o'clock we saw a skiff coming toward us, containing the captain and a venerable looking man whom we should have taken to be a priest had he worn a soutane. It was indeed the Vicar-General, Father Varela, who had been sent by the Bishop to escort us to our destination for the night. The sea was fearful; and how were we to get down to the boat? I whispered to the Sisters, "Come; if we have to die, let us die and say nothing!" Then I led the way, descending by the rope-ladder, and the others followed, pale and trembling as if sure of

death. The rain continued to fall, the waves broke upon us on all sides, but we paid no attention to this. Our eyes were fixed upon the ship we were leaving, upon the friends we there made and whom we should probably never meet again in this life. Our hearts were a little heavy; we were leaving our poor ship, which had been our only hope during forty days; to leave it was painful, so true is it that misfortune cements hearts together.

Landing at the quarantine station we again experienced the hospitality of our kind doctor, who had a good fire awaiting us, by which we dried our clothes a little; then in ten minutes a steamer stopped for us and we were off to Brooklyn. Upon our arrival on Long Island every one we met seemed amazed, or changed into a statue, like Lot's wife. People stood gazing at us as if we were extraordinary beings, but we tried to keep in countenance, and neither good nor evil was done us.

Arrived at Madame Parmentier's, we were received like angels from heaven, which lavish goodness covered us with confusion. It would be useless to attempt describing all the kind attentions, the tender care, of which we were the recipients during the five days that we were in the house of this excellent Christian woman. I shall write you details of all this later, and also of the generous devotedness of good Mr. Beyerly, who gave himself so much trouble about our baggage at the Custom-house.

Father Varela, the Vicar-General, was also unremitting in his kindness during all the time we were in New York; he even sent a pious young man to escort us to Philadelphia; but as he could not speak a word of French, Mr. Beyerly did not wish him to be our only guide, so he gave us his chief clerk, that we might have some one to converse with us during the journey. He was an Italian who spoke French very well. See what delicate attentions we re-

ceived from the good God through our friends and His. . . . What particularly caught our eyes, and especially our hearts, as we left New York, was a French flag over a small ship. Oh, adieu, dear country, we are going far from thee! This is perhaps the last sign which will bring the remembrance of thee to our minds; but we shall not need any, for thou dost live in our hearts. Then to ourselves we said: "The true country of a Christian, but above all of a Religious, is heaven." It is for God that we have made this sacrifice, and already He has repaid us; for His protecting hand has assisted us in a special manner; we cannot be blind to the attentions of His providence in our regard. . . . At Philadelphia we were received by Bishop Conwell with extreme kindness. There we learned that Bishop de la Hailandière had not sent any one to meet us, as Father Frenaye had informed him that it would not be necessary, thinking we could well travel without knowing English. After deliberating for some time I wrote to the Bishop of Vincennes that we were reluctant to proceed farther until we should hear from him. While awaiting his reply we were the guests of the Sisters of Charity, who showed us every kind attention. We remarked virtues in those good Sisters which excited our greatest admiration; they were models indeed. The Superior is the finest Religious that I have ever seen; she is tall, and gifted with so pleasing a countenance one cannot help loving her; and her manners are so gentle, her bearing so noble. Her seven Sisters are also very kind; not one of them knows a word of French, yet they devised means of making us pass very pleasant recreations. . . . During the time that we were expecting to hear from our own Bishop of Indiana, a priest from Canada arrived, Rev. Father Chartier, who was on his way to Vincennes. Without further delay we set out

with him, and very fortunate we were to be under his care. The good Bishop of Philadelphia announced us to the Sulpicians at Baltimore. They sent a priest to meet us, and again we were conducted to Sisters of Charity, whose hospitality is always boundless. Not one of the Sisters could speak more than a few words of French, which was at times very amusing. The Superior, seeing that we were very tired, ventured to ask us if we wanted to be "coachmen," meaning did we want to go to bed; and I, in my attempt at English, called her a negro. I do not remember what I was trying to say, but we both laughed heartily. See what it is to be unable to speak the language of the country. At Fredericktown we had an equally gracious reception from the Sisters. Good Mother Rose, ex-Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, had also been notified of our coming by the Bishop of Philadelphia. This worthy Mother impressed us deeply by her profound humility and sweet charity, and with great interest she related to us many details about the foundation of her Community at a time when inconceivable privations had to be endured. But Heaven blessed their sacrifices. They have now a Community that does immense good. Destined especially for the instruction of poor children, and above all, of orphans, they have, nevertheless, a fine academy where instruction is given in all the sciences; but they excel in music, which is simply indispensable in this country, even for the poor. No piano, no school.

## CHAPTER X.

GREETINGS BY LETTER FROM BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE.—RECEPTION AT CINCINNATI BY BISHOP PURCELL.—THE SISTERS OF CHARITY.—REV. N. PERCHÉ.—REV. S. BADIN.—THE SISTERS OF NAZARETH AT LOUISVILLE.—ARRIVAL AT ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.

When the announcement of the Sisters' arrival in New York reached Indiana, the Bishop sent a letter to greet them, as they were obliged to remain in the East until sufficient funds should be forwarded for the continuation of their journey. Ruillé met the expense as far as New York; there they were to be provided for by the Bishop of Vincennes.

It was not deemed advisable to travel through this new, wild country in the religious habit; so the Sisters had to get a secular dress, which was no small expense for a party of six; besides, having been robbed on board the vessel of a considerable sum, their purse was left decidedly light. The letter of the Bishop met them at Philadelphia, and they were gratified to read the expressions of kindly interest from their future Father, who thus addressed them:

Vincennes, Sept. 18, 1840.

At last you are in America! We shall not be disappointed then in our expectations. You have arrived

with your dear daughters—oh, what joy for all of us, and especially for him who writes to you! When you shall know how earnestly you are awaited and loved already, here and at Terre Haute, before being known, you will pardon many things which, perhaps, seem like a want of foresight on the part of the Bishop of Vincennes, but which are only disappointments which he could not foresee, and, therefore, prevent.

I did not send to meet you for the simple reason that there was not time enough between the receipt of your letters and your arrival; and I cannot send any of my priests now, for they are all either sick or overwhelmed with work. Now, my good daughter, what are you going to do? Be not discouraged; hope in Providence. M. Frenaye will provide you at my request with whatever shall be necessary for your journey. . . .

Respected Sister, profit by your stay in the East to see and to visit the schools, the ways of the Sisters, even to acquire some English; this is not hard, they say, for women, pleasantry apart; let us trust it may not be difficult for you.

I beg of you, dear Sister Superior, to try to see in my soul all there is in it of affection and esteem for you, and defer judging until you come to us; at least in the most necessary things, and, above all, on the choice that has been made of the country for the location of your Community. If after that you will understand that the Bishop of Vincennes fails to do many things, sometimes because he cannot do them, or again, because he is bad enough not to want them, even the best, then you will pray for him. *A bientot;* nevertheless, come quickly; ah, yes, come at once. If you delay, the expenses will be double, or the river closed.

Your friend and father,

✝ CELESTINE, Bp. of Vincennes.

Scenic descriptions occupy many pages of the journal from which we have been quoting. The travellers seem to have been particularly impressed by the vast timber lands through which they passed, and it appeared to them that there was enough in waste alone to supply the whole of France, where there was no such prodigality in nature.

The country we passed through [says the diary] was fine, but of a wild style of beauty. On the sea-coast America appeared a world of action, of opulence, of magnificence, of civility; still, there are to be seen other beautiful sights, though these are of a wild, uncultivated kind —beauties of a world which seems to be in its cradle. Those who have seen only this part of America have no idea of what the West is, which is a new world in the New World. Every moment unveils new beauties; at every turn new grandeurs rise before us. Sometimes we are on heights where mountain-tops are our footstools, through whose defiles magnificent valleys spread their verdure, and in the distance other mountains rise superposed one upon the other so as to form an amphitheatre in which the eye is lost in the ravishing spectacle. The roadway at times inspired terror also; on one side the narrow sluice rocks would overhang, upon which were giant trees that seemed entirely uprooted and ready to fall at any moment; on the other side, frightful precipices whose depths one cannot fathom. We everywhere remarked the vast number of trees that were brought low by the axe of time. Like corpses, they lay awaiting burial, and seemingly imploring a friendly hand to give them back to the earth whence they had sprung. No doubt the vegetative qualities of the land here must be owing to the decomposition of decayed trees. I cannot describe the sad

feelings that take possession of the soul at the sight of this death in the midst of life. . . . And there are to be seen some log cabins (she explains how they are constructed). The trees have been burnt down in order to get sufficient ground to raise corn for bread for the people and food for the animals. This is about the only article of diet for these poor people whom our French Republicans call "the happy Americans." . . . At Wheeling we left the stage-coach in which we had passed two days and two nights, riding almost continually, and took the Ohio River boat. This was the most disagreeable part of our journey, the only time, in fact, that we were subject to insolence. The boat was so crowded that we could not get berths. We were obliged to accept the sleep we could get on straw pallets on the floor in a public passageway. I must confess that before I could bring myself to submit to this impropriety I went up on deck and threw myself on my knees to implore grace to bear the humiliation. We were too exhausted to sit up all night; there was no alternative. Our embarrassment was made the matter of great sport for the vulgar passengers, chiefly negroes.

After long delays we arrived at Cincinnati. Rev. M. Chartier went at once to inform Bishop Purcell of our arrival and to ascertain where to take us. The good Bishop himself came immediately to greet us, hired carriages, and conducted us once more to the Sisters of Charity. We were now on the confines of Indiana; how near it seemed to the end! A good dinner was served, but we had greater need of rest than of food, so after our prayers we retired, and I may add, we had not removed our clothing for seven days.

I had a sick headache the next morning; however, we went to Mass in the Sisters' Chapel at seven o'clock and

had the happiness to receive our dear Lord in Holy Communion. Having paid a visit to the Rt. Rev. Bishop, we assisted at the High Mass celebrated at ten o'clock in the Cathedral. I could not restrain my tears on seeing the poverty and desolateness of the church. Never in my lifetime had I seen such a poor one. . . .

The next portion of their journey was again on the Ohio River. They took a steamboat and arrived the following morning at Madison, a town in Indiana, where Bishop de la Hailandière was daily expected. They awaited him two days. Finally in the evening Father Chartier, who had gone in search of him, entered their room followed by the Bishop and two other gentlemen, all in citizens' clothes and covered with mud up to their knees. They could scarcely recognize the Bishop thus disguised. He gave them his blessing, directed them further on their route, and accompanied them to the boat, promising to join them at Vincennes in two weeks. It was a great comfort for them to see him for even so short a time, but they were disappointed at leaving without him.

Continuing to descend the Ohio [again quoting the journal], we had a pleasant ride of about forty-five miles to Louisville; there I wished to spend a day, in order to pay a visit to Rev. N. Perché, a missionary priest with whom I had become acquainted at Rennes, and whom I knew to be stationed at Portland, a few miles from Louisville. Here a new sacrifice awaited us. Our friend was away from home; but instead we had the honor of meeting the very esteemed Father Badin, that veteran among the missionaries. For fifty years he had exercised the office of the ministry in these wild parts. He was the

first priest ordained in the country, and though he had suffered untold trials and fatiguing labors, he still retains all his French gayety and joviality. His stories were provocative of hearty laughter. His countenance expresses innocence, candor, and holiness; one feels better after seeing him. His inquiries about my travelling companions led to the discovery that one of our number, Sister Olympiade, is his cousin. We felt it a great honor to be related to this holy man. I was sorry Sister Olympiade was not with me at the time. I had taken Sister Basilide.

This brings us to the second of October, Feast of the Holy Angels, the forty-second anniversary of Sister Theodore's birth. After noting that it was a great happiness for her to be able to approach the Sacrament of Penance and receive Holy Communion at Father Badin's Mass—a most precious birthday gift from the loving providence of God—she adds:

It was a sweet consolation to address ourselves to this venerable priest. It seemed that the words of divine truth had an extraordinary strength from those lips that had done so much good in behalf of the souls committed to his care. He has indeed suffered for the faith, having been for twenty years the sole missionary in certain parts of the West, where during one period he was twenty-one months without seeing a Catholic priest; consequently unable to have the benefit of sacramental confession. In receiving the Sacred Host from his hands, how privileged we felt! During our stay in Louisville we were given hospitality by the Sisters of Charity from Nazareth, Ky.; a different order from those in the East. Here we were compensated for the hardships we had had to endure by the kindness of the Sisters, although they seem to be in

great poverty. Some good Catholic seculars also showed us great consideration; they are those who have the spirit of the early Christian Church—disinterested charity and generous hospitality—which St. Paul recommends so highly to the faithful of his time, and an ardent zeal for the cause of the Gospel; in fine, all the virtues of our Fathers in the faith.

We shall not dwell further on details of this long and eventful journey, made either by stage or by river boat for nearly a thousand miles; nor describe the scene when the stage overturned in a deep mud-hole near their last station; neither shall we rehearse the incidents of their five hours' delay on the banks of the Wabash River waiting for their turn to be ferried across.

It was the evening of October 22, 1840. They had reached their journey's end.

## CHAPTER XI.

ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS. — FATHER BUTEUX, THE CHAPLAIN.—THE FIRST CONVENT.—POSTULANTS.—THE TITLE OF "MOTHER" BESTOWED ON THE FOUNDRESS.—ANNUAL RETREAT CONDUCTED BY REV. A. MARTIN.—THE HABIT GIVEN.—ADMISSION TO THE VOWS.—LITTLE PROVIDENCE.

Father Buteux, who was then in charge of the parish of St. Mary's, was appointed chaplain to the Sisters that were to make a foundation there. He met them at Vincennes and accompanied them to St. Mary's.

The journal says:

Suddenly we stopped in the midst of a dense forest. It was growing dark. Father Buteux announced briefly that we had arrived. We were perfectly silent; the gravity of the moment excluded any inclination to loquacity. Imagine our astonishment upon finding ourselves still in the midst of the forest, no village, not even a house in sight. Walking a short distance down a hill, we beheld through the trees on the other side of the ravine a log-house with a shed in the rear. "There," said the good priest, "is the farm-house where the postulants awaiting you have a room, in which you will lodge until your house is completed."

We had agreed among ourselves that our first visit should be made to the Blessed Sacrament, and that we would speak to no one until we should have been ad-

mitted to the Real Presence of Our Lord, and there poured out our homage of thanksgiving and renewed the consecration of our lives to His holy love and service. Father Buteux led the way; we followed in silence to the church. THE CHURCH! I send you a sketch of it. Yes, my friends, that is the dwelling of the Lord of the universe—the church, in comparison with which the stables wherein you shelter your cattle are palaces. There it is that every day the Lamb of God is offered up in sacrifice for the living and the dead. There He reposes day and night in a small pyx; no tabernacle, no altar—for can the term "altar" be applied to three boards resting on stakes?

Now they were at home, they felt it. Sister Theodore knelt and kissed the earth, the land of promise. They had obeyed their divine Saviour's mandate: *leave thy lands, relations, and the house of thy father, and come to the land I will show thee.* They had come to *speak to the hearts of this people;* now they were ready to begin their apostolate.

A great infusion of heavenly joy and courage inundated their souls; and from that moment dated Sister Theodore's conversion, as she called it. A new order of thought invigorated her soul, a new element of sanctification seemed infused into her being, which was ever afterwards apparent, increasing from day to day, urging her, drawing her on to heights of holiness. Those singular moments that enter into the life of every one aiming at perfection of virtue are momentous occasions to the soul. Special graces are then given to which is attached the long chain of supernatural aids by which the soul is raised above

the common ways of an ordinarily good life to the plane of higher sanctity. It had prayed, *Teach me, O Lord, Thy ways and show me Thy paths.* The *ways* of the Lord it had learned; now the Holy Spirit would cause it to walk in the *paths* of the Lord. New lights would show it more clearly the Master's will and His good pleasure; new strength would enable it to accomplish more perfectly whatever was revealed to be the holy will of God.

In the superior light of those singular graces the soul is impressed by a peculiar sense of loss, loss of personal merit, though this is not the prime consideration, and loss of power to do good, owing to the inadaptability of the instrument, caused by the countless imperfections that all along have held undisturbed possession in the soul. Accompanying this feeling of unworthiness and weakness is the perception of better things and the desire to attain unto them—a desire, however, without the restlessness that usually attends the execution of our plans—and a calm that gives enjoyment of the vision of peace, the light to see, the love to will, and the strength to do, being simultaneous graces that initiate the soul into the secrets of the heavenly Bridegroom. With great generosity, then, the soul abandons itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and soon attains a perfection it would never have reached had it not surrendered itself completely to the divine impulse. It was grace like this that was infused into the soul of Sister Theodore as she knelt for the first time in that humble chapel at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, and she realized in its fulness the truth of St. Teresa's words: "One soul aiming at perfection does more for God's

honor and glory than a thousand leading a good but less perfect life." Sister Theodore's future will show uninterruptedly the impress of St. Teresa's admirable doctrine; she never ceased inculcating this principle which had wrought so great a change in her own heart.

Called from our brief devotions [the journal continues] we went to meet the four postulants who had been waiting a week for us. They led us to a small room which good Farmer Thralls had given up to them; this, with a corn loft, serves our every purpose—dormitory, refectory, recreation room, lavatory, and infirmary. A shed outside is the kitchen. Think of ten of us trying to live a religious life in a single room and an attic! But we are happy, though located in the very heart of the forest far from any human habitation. Here it is that, less courageous and less mortified than our respected chaplain, Father Buteux, we have already found the cross. This zealous priest lives in a little hut, called also the church, which is only ten feet wide and twelve feet long. I have just measured it. The furniture consists of the altar previously described, over which is thrown during the day a blue calico cover; a miserable pallet at the opposite side of the room; two small tables, one covered with books, the other used for a writing-desk; a trunk, and an old chair. In these environments has this Parisian dwelt for four years—he who was brought up in the comforts of the most opulent city of Europe, where now in the flower of his manhood, and with his brilliant education, he might be one of the most prominent in ecclesiastical circles. The Archbishop of Paris made him the most advantageous offers to retain him there; but he refused everything to come and work and suffer for his God, and to gain souls for His heavenly kingdom. This truly apos-

tolic man told me laughing that he had yet to learn where the trials and privations are. Is he then to be the most pitied? I do not think so.

The primeval forest was in its autumnal splendor when first beheld by the colony of Religious that had come to make the woodlands ring with strains of praise and prayer. The gorgeousness of the scene filled them with admiration, yet nature's loveliness could not be substituted for substantial needs; so practical ends withdrew them to other considerations. They were a religious order, a teaching body; what prospect was there in these environments of executing the works prescribed by their Rule? How could an institution ever become self-supporting whose very location would seem to debar patronage? Where were the sick to visit? the children to teach? scattered over a wide area, there were many indeed; but how were they to reach them with charitable ministrations? "Questions answerless, but insistent."

Meanwhile the little Community settled down to live as best it could in its narrow enclosure. The American postulants taught the Sisters the elements of English, while they in turn applied themselves to learning French. As long as the weather permitted there was outdoor work to occupy them; this was a novelty, and perhaps a pleasant diversion for a while; but when the labors multiplied and the rigors of the season increased it must have been a great hardship for delicately nurtured women.

November 12, 1840, Bishop de la Hailandière made a visit to his newly established colony at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. The diary entry reads:

To-day we have had the pleasure of receiving the first visit from our good Father, the Bishop of Vincennes, and it was on this day that God gave to us a Mother. The Bishop hearing the Sisters speak of Sister Theodore as *La Supérieure*, interrupted them, saying: "Call her Mother." We gave her this new title with all our hearts, and how much nearer she seemed to us when we could appeal to her maternal love and solicitude by the tenderest of names—Mother!

Our narrative shall henceforth give her the title conferred by the shepherd of the flock, one month from the date on which she first received the episcopal blessing as foundress of a religious Community in the diocese of Vincennes.

The Bishop's visit to St. Mary's was an occasion of joy for many reasons. The Sisters had been there long enough to become acquainted with their new surroundings and to form an approximately correct estimate of future needs. There were many matters to discuss, plans to consider, and measures to adopt, all which was done with perfect satisfaction on both sides. Through the solicitations of the Bishop, the family that had given half of their dwelling to accommodate the Sisters were prevailed on to leave the Religious in sole possession of the house. By this arrangement the frame cabin now became the Convent and Mother House of the Sisters of Providence in America.

The first care of the Sisters after the family's departure was to prepare the best room for a chapel in which to keep the Blessed Sacrament. It will be remembered that the chaplain's room was the only place where the Holy Sacrifice was offered. This was so small that all

could not gain entrance during Mass; if they could endure the cold they remained at the door; if not, they were obliged to go away. On the morning of November 29, 1840, Mass was celebrated in the Sisters' chapel and the Blessed Sacrament reserved. From that hour the august Victim has never departed from under the convent roof.

The Sisters, having left Ruillé-sur-Loir before the annual retreat, now found it convenient to fulfil the point of Rule prescribing a retreat once a year. The Bishop appointed his Vicar-General, Rev. A. Martin, to conduct the exercises. The greatest fervor was manifested by all taking part, which filled Mother Theodore's heart with consolation, as we learn from a letter she wrote to Mother Mary of Ruillé-sur-Loir, in which she says:

I was deeply edified and consoled by the fervor and exactitude of all. God will surely bless them, for they are purely devoted to His work. They have boundless confidence in divine Providence, and a very tender love for the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, whom we have chosen to be our Mother. St.-Mary-of-the-Woods is her charge.

The retreat terminated on the eighth of December with general Communion and renovation of vows by the professed Sisters. Permission was granted by the Vicar-General for benediction of the Blessed Sacrament every Thursday, a favor that is still enjoyed at St. Mary's.

Father Martin conceived great esteem for the Community to whom he had given the retreat. They i...

their turn thanked God for the graces He had imparted through the zeal and piety of this able priest, whom they always found thereafter to be one of their best friends. Business matters soon required some correspondence with the Vicar-General. In reply to Mother Theodore's letter he says:

COVINGTON, IND., Dec. 21, 1840.

You say that when I see you again I shall still find the fruits of the retreat. Shall I ever see you again? God knows. And these fruits—I doubt not but that under your hands they have been tenderly cared for and that you will multiply without end. . . . In all things, my good Mother, may God be praised and glorified. He permits many little miseries in the beginning to test your love and consolidate His work. You know well enough, good Mother, that all the works which God does by human hands must bear traces of the infirmities of man; they must, therefore, be purified and consecrated by tribulation. Have good courage. You have great trials, but every trial is a blessing. Adieu, Rev. Mother; pray sometimes for this poor missionary and for the stray sheep after which he must run through deserts and forests at the risk of losing his way very often.

All yours in D. N. J. C.,
AUG. MARTIN.

One of the most encouraging signs of future prosperity during the first winter spent at St. Mary's was the arrival of subjects for the novitiate; by the second of February, 1841, ten had entered. On that day, the Feast of Our Lady's Purification, two of the first postulants received the religious habit and Sister Olympiade took her first vows. Bishop de la Hailandière was

present at the ceremony and delivered a touching address to the new brides of Christ. He spoke most eloquently of the dignity of the religious life, and of the hopes he had in the foundation at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. He repeatedly expressed his pleasure in seeing what was already accomplished, and urged them to persevere in their beautiful vocation and make themselves every day more dear to the Heart of our loving Saviour, that later they might do more for His honor and glory.

The reception of new laborers was always an occasion of great joy and consolation to Mother Theodore. It was, therefore, with particular pleasure that she read the following note from Father Martin, dated April 20, 1841:

This brief letter, which I am obliged to hurry off, will be handed you by a new daughter whom I send to your maternal care. This dear child is full of good-will. I am confident the grace of Our Lord and your charity will be able to render sweet and easy the life she hopes to embrace—a life so opposed to the easy ways of Americans.

Assure your dear daughters of the lively interest I take in them, especially in their advancement in perfection, which is for all—they know it well—the way of the cross.

In answer to the above, Mother Theodore wrote:

You could give me no better proof of your interest in our work than your efforts to send us subjects. If God wants us in the diocese, as your Reverence seems to think, we have a great work before us, a work that requires brave and self-sacrificing hearts. Engage your brother priests to encourage vocations; no doubt in their missionary travels some well-disposed young people will be found; if these are in good health and are other-

wise desirable for a religious body, they will be useful even without the qualifications for teachers. By their humility, obedience, and piety they will draw down God's blessing upon us, while fulfilling the domestic duties of the convent. We will accept good subjects for both kinds of duty, and we shall endeavor by our prayers to make return to those who thus aid us and are our truest benefactors. What would the material part be without the spiritual? We are pleased with the postulant you sent; you know our needs, you know what kind of subjects we want. I feel confident that any you send will be desirable. What a sweet providence it is to find friends thus willing to assist us!

Accept the profound gratitude of my poor little Community, and be pleased also to aid us by your prayers. If you can put me in communication with other ecclesiastics who might be able to send us subjects, the favor will be gratefully acknowledged by her who has the honor to remain, etc.

The next letter referring to postulants appears to be addressed to the priest at Madison, Indiana:

So we shall have a young lady from Madison! I cannot sufficiently express my thankfulness, dear Reverend Father, for the interest you take in our novitiate. Yes, we must have subjects if we are to continue the work begun here at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. In the six months that have passed since our arrival twelve have joined us. That would be very encouraging if all persevered; but, unfortunately, one returned to her family, unable to sacrifice her affections; and there are some others whom we shall be obliged to dismiss unless a great change takes place in their hearts. I beg your Reverence to pray for these dear children, that they may acquire the spirit of their holy vocation. It is difficult for many to under-

stand the necessity of religious obedience; especially does this seem to be the case in this country where the spirit of independence is carried into everything. You understand what I mean, Reverend Father; be pleased, then, to assist me by your fervent prayers in this great work of forming them to the religious life. And send us all the good subjects you can. I bless God for this increase, and also for the tidings received to-day from the Bishop of Kentucky, to whom you had the kindness to recommend us. He expects to send us a postulant in a few months; she is a little above the age at which we like to receive them, but we may accept her if everything else is satisfactory. In gratitude for your kindness, we shall all offer our Communion to-morrow for you and the intention for which you requested our prayers.

In Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

Yours most humbly and gratefully,

SISTER ST. THEODORE.

[In all Mother Theodore's correspondence we find the word "Saint" entering in her signature, but she was never called Mother St. Theodore, and we have followed the custom of dropping the word *Saint* from her title.]

Father Lalumière comes now to console the little colony at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. He is making a missionary tour in central Indiana, and thus writes:

"Rejoice and be glad," said Our Lord to His apostles. These same words I now say to you. Yes, rejoice, for your work is going to succeed. I rode forty miles yesterday to get a postulant for you, and instead of one I found three, but only two can come this summer; the third is too young to enter the novitiate before next year. This has given me so much encouragement that if my poor old

horse were not so tired—we have been on the road four days—I would make another trip to-day to a settlement about thirty miles from here, where there are some very pious families, to try to get more for you. You see, we want you to prosper at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, for you have a grand work to do. And then, we poor missionary priests count on the prayers that will be offered for us in that quiet little convent hidden away in the woods, where worldly thoughts and worldly cares dare not intrude; yes, if we wish to draw souls from the ways of sin, we must have fervent intercessors who will obtain from Almighty God, through the merits of His divine Son's passion and death, the success which our labors alone cannot procure. When we see how much good we could do, and how much we are obliged to leave undone, oh! it makes us pray with redoubled fervor, *Lord send laborers into the vineyard; the harvest indeed is great but the laborers few.*

Be pleased to recommend me to your Sisters, and believe me always in Our Lord, S. L.

## CHAPTER XII.

MOTHER THEODORE'S ILLNESS.—FATHER LALUMIERÈ'S GIFT.—LETTERS FROM FRANCE.—MOTHER THEODORE IS ENTREATED TO RETURN.—POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES IN FRANCE.—DISASTERS AT LYONS AND OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.—CANON LE VACHER.—BISHOP DE LESQUIN.

The bright prospects of the Community, related in the preceding pages, were soon changed to fears and sorrows by the illness that seized Mother Theodore and reduced her to the last extremity. The physicians declared that she had but a few hours to live, and the last sacraments were administered. Alas! were the predictions of her medical friend in France so soon to be realized? The distress of the Sisters was indescribable. Prayers were redoubled, penances multiplied, and sacrifices of every kind that fervor and grief could suggest were offered, added to which were promises made to the Blessed Virgin for their Mother's recovery. For several days there was no change; finally, prayer gained the victory and the patient slowly recovered. During the illness the Bishop returned to St. Mary's and, finding Mother Theodore in so critical a condition, shared the anxiety of the Sisters. What would become of the establishment should she be taken away? There was no one to replace her. The situation seemed desperate.

He went to the chapel where he remained in prayer one hour before the Blessed Sacrament. When he arose from his knees he looked hopeful, and his words were reassuring—"I do not think your Mother will die." The Sisters felt a new hope in the prayers of their good Bishop, whose prediction was fulfilled, much to the universal joy.

Mother Theodore promised in this her extremity that she would procure a statue of the Blessed Virgin in case of her recovery. Not having wherewith to purchase one she appealed to her good old friend of Soulaines, M. de la Bertaudière, who sent her the beautiful statue that is still to be seen on Our Lady's altar in the convent church.

When the Bishop visited Mother Theodore during her illness, he was accompanied by Rev. S. Lalumière, the first priest ordained for the diocese of Vincennes. Father Lalumière was ever afterwards one of the Community's most devoted friends. He brought his two nieces to the novitiate, and upon their admission wrote Mother Theodore the following note:

To-day, after having celebrated Mass for the prosperity of your Community, I will inform you that the Blessed Virgin makes use of me as an agent to offer you two hundred and forty acres of land near Fort Wayne. I say the Blessed Virgin, because to her this land was consecrated. May she accept the gift. As for myself, I ask in return the prayers of your fervent Community, for which I wish every kind of blessing.

There was very little to break the monotony of the daily life of the Sisters during the first winter season at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Letters from their friends

in France were hailed with delight, for they brought rays of sunshine to lonely hearts. The spirit of sacrifice that prompted the Sisters to burn their precious letters whenever a great favor was desired has deprived us of interesting correspondence. The Superiors at Ruillé-sur-Loir were the first to greet the Sisters in their Indiana home, and it is deeply regretted that all we can know of this correspondence is the date of reception as recorded in the diary.

The first belonging to this period, which has escaped destruction, is a letter from Mother Mary to Mother Theodore, after she had learned of the Sisters' situation at St. Mary's:

RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR, December, 1840.

MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTER:

We received the account of your voyage, also the letter that brought us both joy and sadness—joy in learning that you had arrived, sadness in hearing of your actual situation.

You remember that I spoke to you of this undertaking very sincerely when I asked whether you could drink of the chalice that Jesus presented to you, which contained, beside the vinegar and gall, hunger, thirst, privations of every kind, perhaps martyrdom; such were my ideas about the work that Heaven proposed to you, and I was never under any delusion regarding your future. All that consoles me now is that I proposed it purely and simply as a work of devotedness and sacrifice, over which the vow of obedience did not extend. But do not be discouraged, my beloved daughter; expect everything, even impossibilities, from divine Providence, who delights in working on nothingness. Remain then in this nothingness by your humility. If you put yourself too much in

motion, and if you act of yourself, God will not make use of you.

You say that it is unfortunate you cannot speak the language. Moses also spoke thus, begging God to excuse him. Samuel was a child of twelve years and Jeremias was only fifteen when called to serve and praise the Lord. When God wishes to do something He needs nothing. Apart from the faith, is not our institute the most convincing proof that history can furnish of this truth? Have confidence and courage, then, my dear daughter, and we shall do our utmost to assist you, especially by our fervent prayers.

This was followed by a letter from the Curé of Soulaines to Mother Theodore, dated January 15th, 1841:

You cannot conceive [he wrote] how sorry I was at not being able to send you a little *memento* through the letter of M. Marie, or of our excellent M. de la Bertaudière. But their letters had gone when I heard of them. I need not tell you, my dear Sister, the affliction your departure has caused us. We were truly crushed. It would be impossible to describe perfectly the impression that was made at Soulaines by the news that you would return no more. How many tears you have caused! Yes, everybody regrets you and will ever regret you. I wish you could hear all that the dear people express. Says this one: "She it was who gave us clothing." Another says: "She visited us in our illness and feared neither muddy roads nor rain." "To her," we all say it with a holy pride, "we are indebted for the happiness of seeing erected to the glory of God this monument [the church] which is the envy of all our neighbors." How beautiful it is already, the church that we owe to you! The good gentleman has gone to such expense as would seem incredible did you

not know his strong faith and tender piety. With him nothing can be too fine for the house of the Lord. His chapel will be really a jewel where one will fear to step, as in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple. The whole ceiling is ornamented with frescoes, and the cornice, which extends all around, is exquisitely sculptured and is to be heavily gilded. The entire floor will be of marble, representing different figures in mosaic. The walls will be covered with stucco of various tints, and raised ornamentation will surmount the pictures. The work is already far advanced. I will say nothing of the beauty of the altar—you know the plan—except that it will surpass all in richness. You also know what the main altar is to be. The six beautiful pillars with their superb capitals are already at the rectory; also the tabernacle and the canopy, which are of the rarest beauty. I may add further that the broad centre aisle and the two small aisles are to be paved with a rich and rare stone as expensive and as beautiful as marble. What delight there is even in the prospect! But how painful it is for our hearts, especially for mine, to compare your situation with ours, your destitution with our abundance, your poverty with our riches. Yes, my good Sister Theodore, it is truly painful for grateful hearts to know and to recall that the one to whom we gladly render this testimony, to whom we owe our magnificence and our riches, is in a strange land, over two thousand leagues from us, deprived of every convenience, nay, rather, reduced to all manner of privations and hardships. With what pain, yet interest, did we read the journal of your voyage, almost snatching the manuscript from one another's hands in our eagerness to know all. We shared your dangers on sea, we enjoyed your triumph and your reception in New York; thence we followed you, sharing your anxieties and your privations, on to Vincennes, and now we suffer on account of your sufferings

at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. In reading your interesting narrative it seemed to us that we were conversing with you; your happiness and your misfortunes were ours; but I think we greatly increased the former and diminished the latter by the effusion of our pure and sincere friendship. Your very solitude, your forests became enchanted groves, peaceful hermitages, religious sanctuaries, because we were in spirit with those we loved. You recalled to our minds that, with a gay and contented heart, there is no solitude that does not become beautiful and reflect, like our soul, the image of the heavens; whereas, if looked upon from the depths of one's sorrows, gilded palaces appear duller and more sombre than the Catacombs of Rome. Oh, how beautiful is the philosophy of friendship!—above all in the time of misfortune and in a far-off country. Yes, my dear Sister, you have friends remaining at Soulaines, and true friends. Not long ago, according to my daily custom, when I was at the new church, *your* church, admiring it and hastening in desire its completion, one of your good friends, M. B. L——, accosted me, saying, "Is she very far away?" "More than two thousand leagues," I replied. "But," he continued, "she will have time to return before it is finished; write her, I beg of you, Father, to come back for the blessing." Great joy it would be for us all, should we see you arrive at Soulaines for the dedication, which will not take place before the month of July. But if you persist in remaining in poor America, it would give me great pleasure to hear directly from you. I am anxious to have some lines for myself in particular. If you succeed in doing good, contrary to my expectations, have the kindness to acquaint me of it. Several young persons here beg me to ask you if you will receive them in your Woods. It may happen, too, that a priest with whom you are acquainted will make the same request.

Adieu, dear friend, till we soon meet again at Soulaines.

F. Brillouet.

The journal that afforded so much pleasure was the letter sent to Ruillé-sur-Loir containing a detailed account of the voyage and foundation, several pages of which have been given in previous chapters. Portions of this narrative were sent by Mother Mary to the different houses of her Congregation in France; thus they happened to fall into the hands of those interested friends and occasioned the comments in the letters herein produced. Mother Theodore also wrote to the kind lady and gentleman who accompanied her to Havre. Madame Marie answered:

Noizé (Soulaines).

With what transports of joy we have read the interesting account of your journey. It would require a pen like your own to express perfectly the emotions we experienced in perusing its precious contents. When we have friends who undertake a voyage for some distant place, we feel in the depths of our soul a disquiet, a continual uneasiness until we receive reassuring tidings. How much more reason had we to feel a cruel uneasiness at such a distance as we are from you! . . .

What kind of occupation will you have in that country of savages? If you cannot hope to fulfil your vocation successfully, will you remain there, buried alive? No; come back to us, and oh! how gladly we shall receive you!

These expressions of kindness could have been fully appreciated by the Sisters in their new home, yet they awakened no hope, possibly no desire, to return to their native land. They had left it for the service of God;

they were not to be diverted from their holy purpose by inducements of merely natural affection.

Madame Marie, having received a letter from St. Mary's before posting the above, adds:

Can it be possible that you have not yet received our two letters? [Hers was dated January 15, 1841.] The first was sent by the Brothers who left for Vincennes three months ago. Alas, we do not know whether the poor travellers have reached their destination or perished. The rigors of the winter cause us to fear much for their safety as well as yours. Dear Sister, we beg you not to stay where the climate is so severe. Does God ask the sacrifice of your life? I cannot think so. The devotedness with which you have endeavored to fulfil your holy mission must suffice in His sight. . . .

If the hope of seeing you again does not console us, at least it keeps up our courage. We pray daily for you and your dear companions; but, very respected Sister, why do you refuse to return to a country where your zealous labors would effect a certain good, whereas in your forests it seems doubtful of results. Although not at all qualified for persuading, I venture to supplicate you, my dear friend, to consider in the religious spirit which animates all your actions, how useful you would be here at Noizé. Only the other day my husband said, "If our good Sister Theodore would return I would not go back on my promise; but before embracing a new kind of life I should have to be well convinced, and I feel that she is the only one who can enlighten and convince me. I will not perform an act of hypocrisy." There, now, dear Sister, my own pleasure in soliciting your return is not the vital question; it is a soul to save. In Indiana others could do the work, but here you alone are necessary.

A letter from M. de la Bertaudière to Mother Theodore expresses the same feelings of attachment and regret at her absence, his fears concerning her health, and his wish to have her present at the dedication of the new church in Soulaines. To this he adds:

We are now at the end of the unfortunate year 1840. The disasters of Lyons and other surrounding departments of the South, where inundations such as never before had been witnessed have destroyed and left without shelter, clothing, or any kind of provisions upwards of sixty thousand poor people, who occupied the three thousand houses that have been submerged; it almost breaks our hearts to think of them. Collections are being made and subscriptions taken everywhere, but it would require millions to repair these disasters. Then, we are on the eve of a general war against the combined powers of Europe, without an ally, and unless Louis Philippe makes himself very meek, and bends very low, he shall have "to pay the piper" dearer than ever. If he does not have war with the foreign nations he will have it at home, unless he is very careful. Journalism, that political pest, according to my idea, which blows the fire with all its might, will likely finish by enkindling it, and then it will need blood, and a great deal of blood, to quench it. In your far-off country you will be able to hear the blows without fearing them, unless it be from the side of Canada. This, however, I do not expect. . . . Pray for us, then, that we may be spared so great a calamity.

The Sisters could scarcely be expected to be indifferent to the state of affairs in the country they had left. They were Royalists in the depths of their hearts, but some were more in sympathy with the exiled Charles X. than with the reigning sovereign. Political affairs had

at all times been banished from the conversation of the Sisters, yet not with a narrowness that excluded any expression of views. In this respect, as in all things, Mother Theodore's greatness of soul found its attitude perfectly expressed by the principle, "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity." Above all things she dreaded another civil war in her native country. The fears expressed in her friend's letter were therefore the subject of prayer for the entire community.

After reading it to them she said: "M. de la Bertaudière says it will take blood to quench the fire if once kindled. My Sisters, we will offer the Precious Blood of the sacred wounds of Our Lord a thousand times a day, not to extinguish the flame, but to prevent its being kindled."

Fortunately the cloud seen above the horizon did not break until eight years after, when the reign of the Citizen King terminated by the revolt of 1848, after which the second republic was declared.

To this first year spent in the woodlands of Indiana must also be ascribed the letter of Canon LeVacher, Econome of the Seminary at Rennes. He wrote:

MY VERY DEAR SISTER:

I suppose, charitably, that you have written to me; but I must state that the letter so ardently desired has failed to reach me. I have received no tidings of you since you left France, except indirectly; some items have come to my hearing regarding your voyage, your embarrassments, and your manner of living in the New World. It seems that you have not a very long way to go from the refectory to the parlor, and from this to the kitchen, dormitory, etc.

No doubt these early inconveniences were the cause of the grievous sickness which brought you to the brink of the grave. I shared in your distress, but, unfortunately, you were not aware of it. Your faith, stronger than nature, has upheld you in this trial, dear Sister, and God has given you grace in proportion to the sacrifices you have made; and He promises besides to reward you a hundred-fold for all you have done and even for what you have desired to do for Him. We keep on going at our usual quiet pace here at Rennes. The schools and asylums that you began are prospering; but we have had an affliction in the loss of our good Bishop, Mgr. de Lesquin, whom we loved so tenderly. He thought proper to resign and retire to Dinan, to occupy himself solely with his last end. Had he consulted his clergy, nay, his whole diocese, death only would have deprived us of him. He is replaced by one of his grand vicars, Mgr. St. Marc, whose consecration took place on the tenth instant, in our new cathedral, the consecrator being Bishop de Lesquin, assisted by Bishop Bouvier, your esteemed superior, and Bishop d'Hercé of Nantes; there were present, besides, seven Bishops, the Abbot of La Trappe, and more than nine hundred priests. The solemnity was imposing and brilliant, and all passed off perfectly. The galleries, seating two thousand six hundred persons, besides the rest of the church which was well filled and gorgeously ornamented, produced a magnificent sight. Your good Mother-General, with over thirty Sisters, assisted at the ceremony. It was the day after the closing of the retreat, which was given by Father La Croix, a Jesuit, to sixty-two Sisters. You see we are not on the decrease here.

I hope you will soon indemnify me for my long waiting by giving me abundant news of yourself and of your Sister companions; also of your position, and some details about

the country. You will, above all, pray for him who has the honor to be, with sincere respect,

Your very humble servant,

LEVACHER.

Among the highly appreciated correspondents must be mentioned prominently the estimable Bishop de Lesquin, formerly of Rennes, whose edifying letters addressed to Mother Theodore while she was at Soulaines have awakened in us sentiments of the highest regard for the holy prelate. The diary mentions the correspondence, but unfortunately we can find only the last letter from the revered Bishop, which, although it belongs to a later date, is introduced here on account of its connection with matters belonging to this period:

Our Sister of the Woods is no more forgotten than she herself forgets her old acquaintances. The distance that separates us cannot weaken the sentiments of the heart, which can leap over space—thought knows how to lessen distance. Living, like yourself, in a sort of solitude, I must own that I know almost as little of the events that are transpiring even in our part of the country. However, I know of one that will afflict you as much as it does me. On the very day that your letter arrived poor M. Blandeau was at the point of death. Having left Rennes with symptoms that alarmed his friends, he went to spend some days with his family, having had some business also to transact at St. Brieuc. He passed through Dinan, where he was obliged to take to his bed immediately; that was Wednesday, and on Friday evening he breathed his last. He received the last sacraments in full consciousness. I spent several hours with him; a short time after, he passed away surrounded by the members of his family, loved and

regretted by everybody. There was a general consternation. I have lost an excellent friend who, I hope, has obtained grace and mercy before Him who lifts up and casts down, who strikes and heals, and who disposes all things as He pleases. It is unnecessary to beg your prayers; I know your charity needs no solicitation.

I believe that M. Botent is at Paris, where he directs a religious community. He gives no signs of life to any of us. He is altogether dead to himself and to the world where he lives, as though he lived not. M. LeVacher still lingers, and the greatest fears are entertained about him. You are right in saying, my dear Sister, that he who lives on is condemned to see all those he loves disappear before him. I have had the sorrow to lose two of my sisters recently, whom I recommend also to your prayers. Of the two nieces who have come to live with me, one is confined to her bed of pain which leaves her no rest day or night.

On the twenty-third instant I shall enter upon my eighty-second year. Several maladies have taken hold of me; still I should be very ungrateful did I complain.

The details you have given me about your establishment in America interest me very much. Since it is the work of God I am not surprised that you have met with great contradictions. The battle that enemies keep up is always to their disadvantage; they work for the earth, whereas you work for heaven. The division is not equal. You have ever before your eyes the great maxim: "If the labor affrights us let the recompense spur us on." You sacrifice yourself to God, who has sacrificed Himself for you, and who will render you a hundred-fold for what you have rendered Him. I rejoice at the attachment your worthy Bishop has for you, to whom I beg you to offer my respects.

May the Lord bless you a thousand times, as also your holy companions and dear children.

✝ C. G.

These testimonials of affection and encouragement were supplemented by tidings from her own Bishop announcing another subject for her family circle. After assuring her that he does not oppose the dismissal of one of her subjects, one of the first four, whose unfitness for the religious life was apparent, he continues:

Another postulant is going to present herself whom you will be obliged to receive, at least on trial;—I say *on trial*, without any prepossessions or prejudice in regard to her qualifications, which, they say, are more than sufficient for her admission. M. Lalumière found her in the East; she is highly recommended by M. Varela, the Vicar of Philadelphia. As an answer from you could not have been received before starting, he concluded to bring her and trust to your goodness. I am pleased also that Miss L—— is going to you. There is nothing against her but her delicate health and her scruples; the latter, however, you will soon be able to dissipate. . . . Others will come yet, for God will bless you.

## CHAPTER XIII.

MOTHER THEODORE'S INTERIOR TRIALS.—COUNSELS FROM HER SPIRITUAL GUIDE.—MICHAEL GUTHNECK IS EMPLOYED AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.—HIS THREE DAUGHTERS JOIN THE COMMUNITY.—CHARLES GUTHNECK SUCCEEDS HIS FATHER.—HIS TWO DAUGHTERS ENTER THE CONGREGATION.—REV. M. GUTHNECK.—MOTHER THEODORE TENDERS HER RESIGNATION AS SUPERIOR.

The marked kindness of Bishop de la Hailandière on first acquaintance with his spiritual daughters is repeated in many of his letters belonging to this period of the Community's existence in his diocese. Writing to Mother Theodore, January 19, 1841, he says:

My dear Daughter in Jesus Christ:

This will be the title I shall henceforth give you, as it pleases you and it proceeds from the depths of my heart —this poor heart which suffered so much while God held you fastened to His cross, and your soul seemed to wish to fly to His bosom, there to rest in His embrace. And you are still nailed to a bed of pain, uncertain as to the future, still hovering between life and death. I think myself that you are out of danger, and if you do not improve quickly, well, even in that I can see new proofs of a kind Providence. The assurance of your recovery, had it been given suddenly, would have impressed us too vividly. I believe some could not have borne it, too

great would have been their joy; and the prayers, perhaps, would have ceased to be offered with the same fervor. Nevertheless, I must confess my anxiety; I await news of you from the post and I get none to-day. It is already 10 P.M. I must make the best of it and go to my repose, trusting to Providence. Oh, how good is our God to all, but to us in particular! Let us never forget this. My heart is full of the remembrance of His benefits lately received; my eyes fill with tears in grateful recollection. But what am I doing? Speaking of myself, when in your sufferings I ought to be speaking to you of God alone. O, my daughter, do not become cold in His love. Spouse of Jesus Christ, take care not to give to any one else the smallest portion that belongs to Him alone. Oh, how much I desire that you may be holy!

These words were consolation to the sufferer, and had the effect of intensifying her desire to become very holy, on which subject she opened her heart without reserve to her spiritual guide. He appreciated the confidence she reposed in him, as may be seen from his next letter, dated February 1, 1841.

The satisfaction I experienced in reading your letter cannot be expressed. Truly I feel such affection for you —I say it in all simplicity—and then God gives you so much candor towards me, such confidence in my guidance, that it seems to me I ought to lead you straight to sanctity without fail. In fact, I have the will to do so, but the will alone does not suffice; in order to teach a thing one must know it. There is a question of sanctity which one must first have acquired before undertaking to form others; therefore I ought to decline giving any kind of instruction in that course. I say it to my confusion, I feel obliged to acknowledge it; nevertheless, be convinced I shall do what

I can for you. God will do still more, and His good Mother, our blessed Mother, will not abandon you.

The next letter (February 9, 1841) asks the foundress whether she will receive as a postulant a young woman who arrived but recently from Alsace; "she is a daughter of Michael Guthneck, the farmer in charge of St. Mary's." After this inquiry the Bishop says:

By these few lines I want to oblige some one to answer, that I may have news of you. You continue better, I trust. But the "better" comes so slowly in every way. Blessed are they that suffer.

Then follow some counsels on the spirit of detachment, and various minute instructions as to the care of her health. The Bishop concludes by saying:

Do not carry this indifference too far; it might be hurtful to that poor body which must be restored to health. You will have mortifications enough; plenty to bear from your new daughters; many miseries will have to be encountered; you will have to bear all from them, and yet not let them feel anything but the charms of your tenderness. . . . The main thing now is to keep your heart raised on high, on the cross, if God so wills it, but always on the cross by love. Love God, love Him alone with all your heart; that is the important thing.

Mother Theodore was pleased to admit the daughter of Michael Guthneck on account of the esteem she had for the good old man, whose interest in St. Mary's deserved and obtained unfailing recognition. Not only did he devote the remainder of his life to the work, but he gave to the Sisterhood his three daughters, known in religion as Sister Thérèse, Sister Martha, and

Sister Mary Frances, all of whom are remembered in the Community as persons of exemplary devotedness.

Some years after death ended the labors of good *Père Michel*, as he was called, his son Charles succeeded to the employ. The charity of this truly devout and generous man prompted him to give himself to the service of the Community in exchange for his board and clothing. He asked no other compensation; but the Community continues materially appreciative of his former services, now that the infirmities of old age have compelled him to leave St. Mary's, and it will continue to look after his temporal wants to the end. Charles Guthneck was gifted with a fine bass voice, and, possessing a thorough knowledge of church music, he was identified with the choir until his advanced years compelled him to relinquish what had been a source of pleasure and devotion to him for so many years. The dignity of the priesthood was conferred on one of his sons, Rev. Michel Guthneck, at present in charge of St. Michael's Church at Madison, Indiana; while God gave the grace of religious vocation to two of his daughters, one of whom died at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods in the early days of her profession, the other still survives, a zealous laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

Mother Theodore hastened to inform the Bishop of her improvement in health, which permitted her to visit the chapel again and to assist at Mass. To these good tidings he replies:

What! to have been to the chapel, you whom we expected but a few days ago to carry to the grave! It is almost a resurrection from death. You continue to suffer, nevertheless; that does not surprise me, my daughter; it

cannot be otherwise. Besides, God, who loves you so much, wishes to purify you more and more. It may be that henceforth you will have a shattered frame, or, at best, only a half-restored health. Well, even in that we must see a new proof of the love of God for you. No more to be taken from the cross in order to keep you nearer to Himself—is it not a privilege, a most happy thing for one who can understand it? . . . The will of God, so admirable, so kind, even when it appears so hard, should we not love it? May the Holy Spirit say to you what I cannot.

Seeing herself reduced to great weakness, Mother Theodore had grave doubts as to her permanent recovery; a relapse soon awakened further misgivings. Her solicitude for the welfare of her charge naturally would give her some uneasiness in the matter; but again she hears words of encouragement from him who had taken so great an interest in her soul:

February 21, 1841.

Do not entertain those thoughts, my daughter; they would give pain to all who know you, but especially to those around you. Abandon yourself ever to God, then sleep in peace in the arms of Providence. Do not be troubled, even if you find yourself guilty, as you say, in a thousand ways. Humility requires that we be calm, though repentant. What a beautiful virtue, and how happy we would be did we possess it! However, let us not speculate much about it, but let us come to the practice. Let us not look so much at ourselves—certainly we must be pretty well acquainted with ourselves by this time—there is nothing in us; but let us look often at God; in particular at Him by whom God is made known to us, His divine Son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, our model. Last Thursday I preached on this subject with much consolation; again to-day, and

if possible I shall continue to do so all during Lent. Can we speak enough of Jesus? Let us keep ourselves always near this good Master. Everything is found in Him.

A few days later the Bishop again writes:

Do you know why I feel so great an interest in you? It is because God loves you so much. It is His grace, His work that I love in you, His designs that I admire and adore. May you comprehend them well, never willingly putting any obstacles to them. God, my daughter, wishes you to be holy; yes, *holy*, and not simply good.

You say that you have nothing to offer but your good-will; but do not forget that even this good-will is not our own; we have it only from God. We must convince ourselves that we have nothing of our own but our sins; what is good in us comes from God. *All things from Him.* Begin with this thought, awaiting and expecting everything from Him and earnestly asking everything from Him. But in all things be gentle, calm, equable, patient, particularly with yourself; desire nothing with too much ardor, not even your own sanctification. Let nothing frighten you, neither the difficulties that you will meet with from others, nor your own miseries; draw from these the conviction that should ever deepen in us, that in the eyes of God there is nothing worthy in us.

These counsels, foundation principles in the spiritual life, were fully appreciated by Mother Theodore, who had placed herself under the guidance of her venerated Bishop, notwithstanding his protestations of unfitness to guide a soul in which it was evident God did great things. But it would seem that God alone willed to be her guide, and we shall soon see how her soul expanded under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Bishop's next letter bears the date, March 20, 1841:

The views of God, the designs of Providence [he writes], I know them so little, I desire so little to know them. I defer, I feel my way, and I find this works well; for while I am deliberating God often acts Himself in a different way. I entreat you also to act in this way, my daughter. We must pray much, since it pleases God to do His work through us, and then let us have confidence that He will do it, not placing any obstacles to His views; then, if we do not do the good we might, at least we shall not do any harm. Nothing so much prevents the action of God in our works as the hurry with which we perform them. Let us work with love and gently, awaiting everything from the goodness of God.

Further he says:

You give me great pleasure, my dear daughter, by saying that you feel more and more the desire of becoming holy. You do well in wishing this. May your desires ever grow stronger with a determined, peaceful will that goes straight to the end. To will holiness in this manner is to be very near to the accomplishing of it. One thing will aid you very much in your designs, that is, to desire only the will of God, to will what He wills. For this end strive to purify your intention ever more and more; in this practice you will find a great source of blessings for yourself and your house.

Bishop de la Hailandière laid great stress upon this kindling of good desires, which is very essential if the soul wishes to advance in the path of perfection. A saint tells us that good desires are the wings wherewith we mount to God; and another ascetical writer states

why good desires are so important a factor in the spiritual life; "because," he says, "they are the principles of action. . . . The fervent soul believes it a duty to do all that she can; she thinks she can do all that she desires, and she desires all that the fervor of love inspires."

It appears that when Mother Theodore saw the great difficulties the Bishop had to encounter and the little prospect that he would be able to execute the plans he presented to the Superiors at Ruillé-sur-Loir; when she saw, moreover, the isolation of her Community, so far removed from the opportunities of working for the benefit of souls, the prime object of the Rule, she suggested to him that they could return to France. This deeply affected him; he refers to it now, after several months, in a letter addressed to Mother Theodore in March, 1841:

My heart is still full of sadness as I recall that when I proposed to help you, to console you, or at least to share in your trials, it was the occasion of a new sorrow. That word—"We could return"—still rings in my ears. Ah, my good Mother, let us endeavor to understand each other well; have confidence to believe my word when I tell you that your institution is that of the diocese; that you and your dear daughters, your present and your future, your trials and your anticipated successes occupy almost all my thoughts; nothing could cause me more consolation or more sorrow than your consolations or your discouragement; that if you do not find in me what you have a right to expect, hope for something better in future, but do not get discouraged. Let us live a little on hope, but above all, let us live on love.

A recent letter from M. Moreau (Superior of the Brothers of the Holy Cross in France) assures me that his Brothers will come next spring. Let us pray that his promise will be fulfilled and that this other foundation will also be blessed. It has less hope, humanly speaking, than you have; you are soon going to be rich proprietors—yes, I have bought Thralls' land and have paid two hundred dollars less by waiting for it. . . . I enjoyed seeing you so much and bore away with me [Feb. 2d] so many edifying remembrances, consolations full of hope, that I thought I ought by way of compensation to impose upon myself this little sacrifice. You—ah, you have many to make. May you never succumb to them.

A communication bearing the date April 24, 1841, informs us of an accident on the river, when Mother Theodore was returning from a visit to Vincennes, whither the Bishop had called her to consult an eminent physician. Referring to this mishap and to other matters that disturbed the tranquillity of her soul, the Bishop says:

It was only last evening I received the letter which informed me both of the accident to your boat and of the trouble in your soul. By the mercy of God you escaped a grave disaster, and, as to the interior, I confidently suppose that quiet has been restored ere this. Thus the calm comes after the storm, peace after agitation; and thus too will rest come after labor, rest and refreshment after the burden and heat of the day, sweet repose in God. Ah, let us seek this rest with all our hearts; even in this life we may taste of it. Yes, that was truly, as you say, a providential interposition—a boiler exploding without injury to any one or to the boat. Who could help seeing the finger of God in your regard? O good Providence!

The spiritual cares devolving upon Mother Theodore in the formation of her subjects were the cause of her greatest anxiety; often she was heard to say that the temporalities gave her very much less concern. She had wide experience in the management of temporal affairs, and her administration had always been successful; but the unfamiliar offices belonging to her new position gave her more uneasiness. She feared that the care she bestowed on others would draw her away from the work of personal sanctification. "What will it profit me to have gained the whole world if I lose my own soul?" was the question ever uppermost in her thoughts. Moreover the natural tenderness of her heart, her boundless love and sympathy for human kind, made her suspect that her affections were unholy and would rob God of hearts that were pledged to Him alone. It sometimes seemed to her that her new work was a snare in which the enemy of souls would entrap her. In all these various disturbances and anxieties she had recourse to her guide in all simplicity.

In regard to the point on which you consult me (the Bishop asks), does it take away that repose, that peace in God which formerly reigned in your soul? Does it prevent you from going to Him, from finding this Spouse of your soul? If it does, judge that it is not right; that there is at least some imperfection hidden under the affection; reform either the principle or the manner. On the contrary, should you find in it something that draws you to God, something which gives courage, which sustains you and makes you love the cross more, judge then that the affection is not injurious; nevertheless, purify your intention more and more; in this case the passing troubles that you experienced would be but a trial.

Other correspondents at St. Mary's also claimed the Bishop's attention, and although he had written to Mother Theodore a very short time previously, he now sends these few lines to her:

How can I write to Sister —— without saying a few words to you, my very dear daughter, who with all your dear daughters are ever present to my mind! Every day I offer you at the altar. Our dear Bishop Flaget does the same; he has written me a very charming letter concerning you. You must have felt the effects of his prayers, if not in the poor body which continues very weak, at least in the soul. I speak in this way because I have a feeling sense of the effects of his prayers; for he places us quite near each other, and indeed, I feel these days a little nearer to God. Do not tire yourself by writing to me; you are not in a condition to do so without inconvenience. Impose upon your pen the fast you would like to perform this Lent, but which you are not able to do. Punish *it* instead of yourself. Ah! thus it was with Our Saviour. He had to suffer for no fault of His, but for our sins which were heaped upon Him. . . .

After some inquiries regarding other subjects to be admitted, he adds:

I thought it might be pleasant for both to enter together and encourage each other. To walk together—how beautiful, how delightful! Await those among your daughters who do not walk fast enough; aid them a little. . . . Your lamp must be full by this time, so many persons try to put something into it.

The last remark has reference to the different counsels that were offered to Mother Theodore by persons of

foresight and experience, as well as piety and uprightness, and who only sought the good of the Community.

Mother Theodore now found herself in a strange predicament; it was the beginning of a time when not only consummate courage and humility were necessary, but the greatest prudence as well. As she was always perfectly candid with her Superiors, circumstances led her to suggest to the Bishop that her withdrawal from the office of Superior might be better for God's sake, and she would be very happy to tender her resignation.

The Bishop's reply on this occasion was as follows:

VINCENNES, June 13, 1841.

GOOD MOTHER AND VERY DEAR DAUGHTER:

What end had you in view when writing that last letter? To cause me a new pain? No; such a thought could not have entered your soul. To please me? That would be a great mistake, and still it seems that that is what you anticipated. As for myself, I cannot judge you so severely as to think you have so soon forgotten the special interest that I have openly manifested before and against all, to such a degree as to suppose that your departure would give me pleasure. I forbid you to think any more on this project, and if you have taken any measures in regard to it, I command you to withdraw them; and I command you, my dear daughter (this severe language is necessary to fix your will on this point), to tell me by whom this determination of yours has been advised or required; it does not proceed from yourself. But recently I left your Community thinking all was at peace and in a fair way, and now a new source of difficulties comes up. In what and in whom can I trust? Only the other day you said, "Though all should leave yet I will not." What perseverance! Truly, my good daughter, were I not convinced

that this does not come of yourself, I should try to humble you very much; you would deserve it for so much inconstancy. No; I am not a dissembler. When I told you everything that I considered blamable in you with such simplicity that fear of forgetting caused me to say some little things that were not true, assuredly, if I had something more to say I should have said it. However, do not afflict yourself about this; you have had before God the merit of such a resolution, and I have not felt the pain that you expected or supposed. I know you too well to fear that you would carry into execution such a determination. What will come of all this? I see in it time lost, pain given and received; what else? I may be mistaken, but I suspect some mystery here that must be unravelled; this it shall be my business to do. As for yourself, my daughter, return to your ordinary state of mind; keep your soul in peace; pray much and love God with all your heart. How different are the ways of God and His designs from ours! For my part, how much deception I have met with in the ways I have walked!

It will be whatever God shall please in regard to Madame W——. Do not trouble yourself any more about that than about the rest; work at your sanctification, that is all.

My blessing from my heart for all your Sisters, a more abundant one for yourself, from him who is always

Yours in Our Lord,

✝ CELESTINE, Bp. of Vincennes.

June 17th brings another letter to Mother Theodore.

Again your Bishop addresses you a few lines, without leisure, but not without positive pleasure. . . . Please tell Sisters Aloyse and M. Joseph that I beg to be excused from writing to them at present; it is impossible for me to

write now in the midst of a great amount of business and a sea of bitterness on whichever side I turn. Oh, I trust God will come to my aid that I may not be unfaithful to His grace. But why do I tell you this? In order that you may take courage in the midst of trials by which you find yourself surrounded. Yes, good courage! God knows all, and He beholds you; the end of your pains will come, if not in this life, at least in the next; there you will see, there you will know, there you will bless forever the God who seems to hide Himself from you.

After announcing another postulant, he says:

Evidently God is blessing you, my dear daughter: confidence, then, and after that keep yourself humble before God.

This last acquisition was our dear Sister Ann, in whose coming the Community was truly blessed. Sister Ann desired to be received as a lay Sister; her request was granted, and the humility that made her shrink from worldly ambitions caused her to find in the religious life the hundred-fold of joy. Her whole life told only of the sunshine of God's love; she was a pillar to the infant Congregation, and to the very end of her seventy-six years an edification and a consolation always.

The same year the Bishop was pleased to announce another whose long life of usefulness has given her a wide circle of appreciative friends; reference is here made to Sister Caroline, at present (1904) the oldest living member of the Congregation, and one of the few who can claim the honor of having been admitted by the holy foundress.

The letters of Mother Theodore written at this time

to Bishop de la Hailandière unfortunately have not been preserved. As they were chiefly of a personal character she kept no copies, and perhaps for the same reason the Bishop did not leave them among the collection preserved in the diocesan archives. We can infer, however, what their contents must have been from the Bishop's letters here presented. We also perceive that the first years were a period of great interior trial to Mother Theodore. The correspondence is at present interrupted by a chapter that will give us a deeper knowledge of the spirit and character of her who was chosen by divine Providence to lay the foundation of the great work established at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

## CHAPTER XIV.

GENERAL SPIRIT OF THE CONGREGATION AS SHOWN IN MOTHER THEODORE'S TEACHINGS AND DEVOTIONS.

"Of all divine things," says St. Denys, "the most divine is to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls." As religion was the motive that, centuries before, had carried the power of France into the Western Hemisphere, so the salvation of souls was the lodestar that drew the Sisters of Providence from their convent home in France to the heart of Indiana. While awaiting opportunities for exercising the principal object of their holy vocation—instructing youth,—they occupied themselves more intimately with the work of personal sanctification, not as though sanctity were a business that could engage attention for a time and then be replaced by exterior works of charity, but as a consequence of enforced leisure, an opportunity turned to advantage.

Meanwhile the work of the foundation was in progress; and when the spring opened all were actively engaged in the improvement of their surroundings. Mother Theodore's vast range of knowledge in the domestic and practical order was productive of excellent results. Workmen were pushing to completion the Academy building begun the previous summer; the grounds

around the house were being cleared, gardens laid out, roads and walks constructed, all under the direction and supervision of Mother Theodore; in fact, in many cases she and her brave-hearted associates accomplished the work themselves, although unaccustomed to farming and heavy manual labor. It was a novel and very often an amusing experience to them all, but they were happy in it. A letter of the foundress referring to those times says:

All these labors and privations, far from abating the courage of the Sisters, seemed to add to their good spirits; never did we enjoy our recreations more than during those days of trial; not once did I hear a complaint; never a regret for what they had left, and I was the confidante of these dear daughters, whose patience and fervor were my greatest consolation.

They were indeed typical French, whose national spirit Lacordaire described to be that of a soldier and of an apostle.

Despite the distance that separated the new building from the Sisters' dwelling, and the numerous details that required Mother Theodore's personal attention, she rarely failed to give her daily instruction. "That was a delightful hour," writes one whose privilege it was to live through those times; "we longed from one day to the next for *conference*. Her words seemed to come from the Heart of God Himself."

From these familiar discourses that were so heartily enjoyed by the fervent Community we cite a few extracts which will show the general spirit that animated Mother Theodore. The first was delivered after a journey she made to Louisville and Cincinnati for the pur-

pose of procuring house furnishings, books, etc., at which time she took advantage of the opportunity to visit the schools in those places and to consult with eminent ecclesiastics, especially the bishops, on affairs pertaining to her infant Congregation. From these we gather the following notes:

You expect, my dear children, that I now have many new things to say to you which have been collected in my travels; that I can now give you many new lights. This, indeed, I should desire much to be able to do; but be not disappointed to find that they will radiate from the same old truths which you have heard repeatedly. Close not the eyes of your soul to them, for you will see many things in new lights if you give the Holy Spirit free access to your minds and hearts. Oh, who can measure the dignity Our Lord has conferred upon us by admitting us to a life in which we share divine honors, associating us with Himself in the salvation of souls! The means are pointed out in our Constitutions—instructing others and advancing ourselves in perfection. Solid virtue—perfection—implies a life of prayer. All our sufficiency is from God, the Apostle tells us; our holy Rules also remind us of this first and imperative duty: "They shall endeavor by prayer to draw the blessing of God upon their labors." And our blessed Lord Himself says: *Without Me you can do nothing.* Knowing, then, our utter helplessness, and knowing also that we shall receive if we ask, let us be souls of prayer. We can never ask too much; for the resistless impulse of supreme goodness is to give, to pour itself forth without measure, as Père Ramière, S.J., says. But a life of prayer supposes a life of self-renunciation. I have spoken much and often in detail of the necessity, the means, the fruit of mortification in general and in

particular; the subject is so vast I could never exhaust it; and for us, my dear Sisters, it is so important we shall never be able to dispense with it. Recall what you have heard; read and ponder the notes you have taken on this subject. With this recommendation I proceed to the remarks I intended making to-day on the virtues necessary for those who would be perfect. Not of raptures and sublime prayer do I speak; not of power to work miracles, though in fact we must perform many in enlightening the minds and softening the hearts of those we instruct. I present to your consideration to-day only a few principles, commonplace truths that will consolidate the basis upon which we are to rear the spiritual edifice. After prayer and mortification, as I have said, first comes common sense. This is a spiritual gift, though it may not appear such; and it is the rarest grace, I believe, that people possess, simply because they do not value it so highly as it deserves. They do not recognize that its elements are several gifts of the Holy Spirit, endowments by which the mind is perfected. They would confine its usefulness to financial or domestic spheres, little thinking that it is the grace which is needed to discern between that which is fundamental, and therefore necessary, and that which is accessory, and therefore only relatively important, in whatever duty demands, obedience prescribes, or piety inspires. How little common sense we find in the world, my dear Sisters! Intellect is not so wanting; there are geniuses everywhere. Behold the inventors, the artists, the authors; but with all their wit, their skill, their fruitful imagination, where is their wisdom, their understanding, their counsel, their knowledge in things appertaining to their immortal souls!

For the accomplishment of good, we must show forth in our every act a perfect justice—justice is the foundation

of the moral law;—all our proceedings must be characterized by this principle. Children are never too young, the aged are never too old, to have it meted out to them; the good are never so perfect as to be insensible to its denial. It is this virtue that will regulate our thoughts of others, that will guard us against hasty judgments of others, that will cause us to hold back the inconsiderate word or imprudent remark; in a word, justice will cause us to think and act fairly, to possess always evenness of temper, and show steadiness and equity in our proceedings. Without strict justice a teacher's success is not possible. You pray for prudence and strength every day, why not also for the grace of justice?

And, lastly, I would mention the gift of piety. In season and out of season, as the Apostle of the Gentiles tells us, we must work for the interests of our Spouse Jesus. Piety is only another name for devotion; and what is devotion but zeal? Try to inspire tender sentiments for our dearest Lord and His blessed Mother; for the angels whose ministry we share; for the saints whose bright example is our encouragement. Show them [the pupils] how sweetly tender is the providence of God, that from their souls may go forth a touching homage of confidence and love; yet do not fail to set before them also the sterner truths; before we can expect to have much love we must lay the good foundation of holy fear, and this not simply fear of the justice of God in the punishment of sin, but of the least imperfection whereby we render ourselves displeasing to the Heart of our divine Saviour.

How very like in thought is this exhortation to a passage in the correspondence of Cardinal Manning; yet, almost ten years before the regenerating waters of baptism introduced the great Cardinal into the one true

Church, we find these words escaping from the servant of God at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. They never penetrated beyond her forest convent precincts; still, one might think that England's great churchman had received inspiration from the humble, hidden Religious of the far West.

For the interest there may be in the comparison, the passage in question is given in full. Writing to a newly ordained priest, the Cardinal says: "Whoever would be perfect must have three virtues or gifts, which because they are so obvious are little spoken of and little esteemed. The first is the cardinal virtue of justice, including firmness, equity, evenness of mind, expressed in word and deed and matured by the inward justice of thought respecting the actions and characters of men. The second gift is spiritual common sense, which is a result of the gifts of the Holy Ghost that perfect the intellect, for common sense is both speculative and practical and signifies a certain intuition by which the reason distinguishes between the substance and the accidents in matters of duty, obligation, obedience, devotion, and the like. Not many people have this common sense. There is more intellect than common sense in the world; more of power, facility, and brilliancy of genius than of this homely grace, which after all is the complex of at least four of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The third is holy fear. We are so fond of dwelling on the love of God that people are impatient to hear of fear. And yet it is the root of all perfection, and if to these [be added a spirit of prayer, such a soul will attain a high and solid perfection." (From "Personal Reminiscences of Cardinal Manning.")

The similarity of thought is striking, as it also is in another passage where the resemblance is with the holy and lovable Father Faber, when he says: "A genial man is both an apostle and an evangelist: an apostle, because he brings men to Christ, an evangelist, because he portrays Christ to men."

Mother Theodore presents the identical thought, though considerably expanded, in her colloquial style:

My dear Sisters [she says], many of us have very homely faces; we can none of us be vain of our beauty; but we have our consolation—*all the beauty of the King's daughter is from within.* If we try to beautify our souls every day more and more by the practice of those amiable virtues that gain the hearts of men as well as the Heart of our divine Saviour, we need not be concerned about our looks. A pleasant countenance will supply what is wanting to us, and this we should cultivate; for, while we cannot change our features, we *can* change their expression. Cold, hard looks repel; but a benign, genial manner likens us to the apostles and evangelists, whom our profession obliges us to imitate. The latter portrayed Christ to men; so shall we if our virtue shines forth. The former drew men to Christ; we shall do the same if we always set them an example of affability and cheerfulness.

One of Mother Theodore's best notes of holiness was her uniform cheerfulness, for that disposition can only spring from humility and mortification. When temperaments are *naturally* joyous, they often suffer change under contradiction and exhibit extremes of low spirits. They need the supernatural element to render them steady. Equableness in vexatious circumstances implies constant repression of nature and a steady judg-

ment to discern that virtue lies in the middle, with a firm habit of avoiding extremes.

Father Faber and Mother Theodore, it is safe to say, had never heard of each other, and we find in comparing dates that the apostle of Indiana had forestalled the thought of the English oratorian by several years. It only goes to show that the Holy Spirit's guidance is visible in all that is done for the greater honor and glory of God, giving inspiration to the utterances in which so great a similarity is often remarked between our servant of God and some of the greatest writers of the Church.

It also emphasizes the fact, and brings it home to our consideration, that truth is always the same—eternal, unchangeable; and that even the terms in which it is expressed cannot be widely diversified, verbal limitations following from the nature of things—the oneness of truth and the forms of language.

Mother Theodore, as we have seen, devoted herself to the religious instruction of her little family with great energy and zeal. She was as solicitous for the few as for the many. She realized that she was hewing the pillars, and "the pillars of a Congregation should be saints." In this maternal care and unabating devotedness she was following the path traced out by all the saints. They never considered that God's glory or the interests of souls ceased to make demands upon them, nor could they ever feel that enough had been said or done as long as there was something more to do for the kingdom of Christ. That was the measure of their love.

It has been said, and repeated even to triteness, that no work succeeds without enthusiasm, without love; love, therefore, is the principle from which all action

springs. It may also be added that love is the point of repose: in the first instance, aspirative and impelling; in the second, contemplative and possessing. This psychological law discloses much that is interesting in its development, which accounts for the charm that biography affords. For, while circumstances are never exactly the same nor characters identical, human nature is the same. There are many points of contrast, many marks of resemblance in the servants of God; but that which impresses us as a note of unity is their zeal, zeal that runs in many channels and characterizes according to the course it pursues, but always tending to the one object—God's greater honor and glory. This differentiation in souls arising from diverse manifestations of love, gives at one time the impulsive and ardent St. Peter, at another, the calculating and vigorous St. Paul; now the military and indomitable St. Ignatius, then the sweet and gentle St. Francis de Sales; here the unexampled and practical business woman, St. Teresa, there the mystic *par excellence*, St. Gertrude; beside the great St. Thomas of Aquin we see the unlettered Curé of Ars; together stand the magnificent and kingly St. Louis and the poverty-loving St. Francis of Assisi; an Alphonsus Liguori of ninety years, an Agnes of thirteen, the one strong with the strength of innocence, the other with the blessings of lengthened days; and all filled with heavenly wisdom, revealing in their lives the wonders grace can and does achieve.

Constitutional and circumstantial differences do not militate against the idea of this unifying principle, for the basis in every case is the same—the secret of their fruitful zeal is personal sanctity.

That Mother Theodore was eminently zealous is to be expected when we consider that the spirit of the Rule, which she endeavored perfectly to observe, is a great zeal for God's honor and glory, and an ardent desire to acquire perfection and to contribute to the sanctification of others; and that this virtue predominated in her character is inferred from her natural temperament, which in her youth showed itself to be strong, impetuous, and responsive to provocation. This trait in her was a happy prerequisite to holiness, destined as she was to a life of great activity, labors, and troubles; for zeal, originating in the appetitive movement and exciting courage that rises up against obstacles to be surmounted in the attainment of the object, is perfected only by means of exercising itself. Grace does wonders, but nature does its part also, and Mother Theodore's natural gifts were a worthy foundation upon which to raise a noble spiritual edifice. Further, zeal, St. Teresa says, is the measure of our love. Now, love is the beginning and end of all endeavor. It was the impelling act that brought into being every created existence; it is the conservative act that governs all with number, weight, and measure;[1] and the reflection of this divine attribute in the human heart, impelling towards the source and attaining its rest in union with the Godhead, this giveth the victory.

Without love the Creator and the creature could never be united, and as love is ever active, the conception of a zeal from which the idea of energy has been eliminated is an impossibility. Love, then, is the principle of ser-

[1] Wisdom xi. 21.

vice in every phase of the religious life. Each order has necessarily a characteristic zeal, defined by the Rule, that distinguishes it from every other religious body. The means are various, but the end is ultimately one. The zeal indicated in the Constitutions of the Sisters of Providence embraces a twofold object, the same that includes the whole law: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul; and thy neighbor as thyself.*[1]

The fulfilment of the precept suggests a corresponding duality, resulting as a characteristic of the Rule, namely, progressiveness and a Community efficiency. In an age when the world is in a delirium of unrest, because "the increate perpetual thirst that draws towards the realm of God's own self"[2] seeks quenching at unsatisfying fountains, when the demand is ever for higher thought and greater facilities, and the means of education have become generally widespread, progress stands for power; and to promote the honor and glory of God by directing misguided humanity to slake its thirst at the perennial fountains of truth, it is necessary to keep apace with the developments of the times while zealously scattering the seeds of Christian faith along the path of progress. God's interests in the world and His interests in individual souls are not restricted to identical means; but they never conflict, their object being the same—the glorification of the Divinity in the salvation of humanity. Progressiveness then becomes a duty, and, as such, a self-sanctifying means, if the advance is along the lines our blessed Lord, the divine

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[1] St. Luke x. 27.

[2] Paradiso, Canto II.

Teacher Himself, pointed out where every exigency is provided for, the divine legislation applying to every condition that society can reasonably demand.

In a corporate body as is that of religious teachers whose members cast aside the idea of personal consideration, and all individual mental and moral attainments amalgamate in a common efficiency, there is a sustaining force that cannot but issue in highly advantageous results. The union of so large a number of persons whose ends and means are the same, and whose energies are awakened or stimulated by intercourse with kindred minds, keeps up a spirit of self-improvement; progress then is the effect as well as the law.

These theories were held by Mother Theodore, who reduced them to practice, first in her own regard, then in the training of others; and the order has steadily endeavored to perpetuate this spirit of its holy and sagacious foundress.

If it can be said that Mother Theodore's spiritual life was stereotyped by any special devotion, we might say it was devotion to the Holy See. She was so proud of the Church, so enthusiastically loyal to its sovereignty, and so ardently co-operative in all its ordinations. The wants of the Church were her personal concern; her prayers, her austerities were directed in a great measure to obtaining blessings upon Christ's Vicar and all engaged with him in steering the bark of Peter.

But, more properly and in a more special sense, it may be said that Mother Theodore had a great variety of devotions; it could not well be otherwise, thoroughly imbued as she was with the spirit of the Church. As in the moral order the four cardinal virtues are the prin-

ciples that govern and direct man's ethical relations, so in the spiritual order there are four devotions to which all others are referable, namely, the Holy Eucharist, the Passion, the Holy Ghost, and the Blessed Virgin. In these the grounds are furnished for a vast number of special devotions—the Holy Infancy, the Divine Teacher, the Sacred Heart, etc. To these also may be referred the doctrines of the Church concerning the angelic ministry, the souls in purgatory, the communion of saints, the continuity of the Church, and kindred subjects. Mother Theodore was responsive to all; but chief among her practices were first and always the four the Church holds in prominence. Further, she never agreed with those who maintained that a variety of practices, a diversified number of devotions, destroyed rather than promoted recollection and union. Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God; different paths lead to Him, different views reveal Him to us. If one way gives us more devotion than another we may keep to that if we choose, but it is always well, in fact it is the proper thing, to enter into the spirit of the Church in the various devotions that her liturgy presents to us. Such was the teaching of our Mother-Foundress.

Among the minor cults, one she endeavored particularly to establish was that of the holy angels, and the novice is early taught the beautiful little practice of saluting the guardian angel of whomsoever she meets. A devotion to the holy angels, Mother Theodore taught, would seem to belong to religious teachers in virtue of their profession, inasmuch as their duties are similar in many respects to those of the angelic choirs. In fact,

every rational act of ours bears a like resemblance, for mental economy has both its legislative and executive powers. We have to decide what ought to be done; we must fit ourselves for the work, and we must foresee the means through which it can be accomplished either by ourselves or others; if by ourselves, leading and instructing; if by others, directing and governing. On this subject St. Thomas thus speaks: "To the rule of government three things belong, the first of which is the distinction of the thing to be done, which is the province of the dominations; the second is to provide the faculty of fulfilling, which belongs to the virtues; the third is to arrange in what way the things prescribed or defined can be fulfilled, so that some one may execute them, and this belongs to the powers. . . . In the execution of any act there are some who begin the act and lead others—this belongs to the principalities; there are others who simply execute—this is the part of the angels," etc.

While we have said that Mother Theodore's practices of piety assumed many forms, it must not be understood that she had equal attraction for all. The Passion of Our Lord and the Holy Eucharist were the subjects of her tenderest thought. She loved to retrace the path to Calvary; and when she performed the Way of the Cross it was always with tears and compunction. When her infirmities prevented her leaving her room she went through the exercise in spirit, with her crucifix in hand, up to the last days of her life. The sorrows of the Son were linked with the sorrows of the Mother; hence the *Mater Dolorosa* was the favorite aspect in which she viewed the Blessed Virgin Mary, in whose honor she every day recited the STABAT MATER.

Another light in which she loved to consider the august Queen of Heaven was that of her immaculate purity. It was under the title of the Immaculate Conception that she consecrated St.-Mary-of-the-Woods—its convent, its academy, and its chapel; it was in honor of the purest of creatures, conceived without sin, that she gave to the pupils the simple white violet as their emblem flower. What better model could she give to her spiritual daughters, since Religious must be the angels of the earth? What better to the children, since our divine Saviour pronounces "blessed" the clean of heart?

To several of the saints also she was warmly devoted, notably her patrons, St. Ann and St. Teresa; but, according to her principle above stated, St. Joseph, patron of the universal Church, claimed her greatest confidence and devotedness; but to all these tender devotions which appealed so particularly to her, must be added in a special manner that of the Sacred Heart. *Providence of God shown forth by the Heart of Jesus!* In these words of the daily litany the key-note is struck. In ways wonderful and worshipful God's providing goodness has ever been manifested to His creatures, but the complement, as it were, of divine love, the crowning grace of His stupendous mercies, is the gift of His Sacred Heart to man. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, then, would seem to be a corollary to that of God's providence. In the one and the other is found the principle that vivifies the Rule, by which the Sisters of Providence are directed in accomplishing the end of their holy vocation. This divine theme running through the career of a religious life, so delightful in its unities, so consonant in its diversities, is heard *afar off*, like Israel's music played before the

Lord on harps and lutes and cymbals and timbrels. From year to year the circle widens and larger grows the influence for good, which finds both its initiative force and its repose of fulfilment in the Sacred Heart of Christ our Lord.

## CHAPTER XV.

ST. MARY'S INSTITUTE.—DEVOTION OF THE MONTH OF MARY ESTABLISHED.—CHILDREN OF MARY SODALITY.—OPENING OF THE ACADEMY.—THE COMMUNITY WITHOUT A CHAPLAIN.—SISTER ST. FRANCIS XAVIER IN INDIANA.

"God," says St. Bernard, "seeing that we are unworthy to receive His graces immediately from His own hand, gives them to Mary in order that we may have through her whatever He wills to give us; and He also finds His glory in receiving through the hands of Mary the gratitude, respect, and love which we owe Him for His benefits, . . . that grace should return to the Giver of grace by the same channel through which it came." ("True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.")

In harmony with this thought of Louis de Montfort is the diary entry of March 25th, where Mother Theodore says, "It is to Mary we owe all the favors that Heaven grants us." We can understand with what pious enthusiasm this devoted client of the Blessed Virgin sought to promote the honor of Mary in the New World. On the first of May, 1841, we find this item in her journal: "We begin the month of Mary as solemnly as possible." This was the origin of the devotion of the month of May in Indiana. From St.-Mary-of-the-Woods it was carried to Terre Haute and other towns, and not many years

passed before the practice became general. At St. Mary's also was organized a sodality whose members were called "Children of Mary," the first in the diocese being formed among the pupils of St. Mary's Institute.

Mother Theodore was appreciative of the Church ceremonies; a special significance attaches therefore to the above item. There are few persons not moved to greater piety by ritualistic splendor, yet "as will and means in mortals with unlike wings are fledged," the simple faith that would love to give magnificent expression to its tenderness, but fails for want of means, is none the less acceptable to the ever-blessed Mother of God, for it is not the gift but the heart of the giver that makes an offering worthy.

The boarding-school was to be opened in the summer of 1841, and to get pupils was now the object of the Sisters' prayers. Arrangements had been made for three, but it was hoped the number would greatly increase by the opening of the session. "We must make a beginning," Mother Theodore said, "and trust to Providence. If it is God's work it will not fail, for we shall leave it in the hands of our blessed Mother, who will not be indifferent to the interests of her divine Son, notwithstanding our unworthiness." In the meantime the Sisters were preparing themselves to perform well their duties as teachers, the spirit animating them being disclosed in the following remark made by their Bishop: "The important thing, after all, is piety, both for them [the children] and for their instructresses from whom the children must imbibe it." The same is said in the Rule to which these young teachers were being formed; it is, moreover, the essence of a truly Christian education, not

a piety that is exclusive of the duties that domestic and social obligations impose, but a piety that seeks first the kingdom of God and His justice, and always maintains the pre-eminence in faith, in hope, and in charity. The teacher's success, they are told, lies not so much in her qualifications, humanly speaking, as in the blessing of God, which she will endeavor by prayer to draw upon her labors. She can plant and water; God alone can give the increase. It can be added with much consolation that the example of patient self-sacrifice and calm, confiding love, given by those pioneer teachers was productive of the happiest results; many a conversion was effected, and many a vocation could also be traced to the silent influence of their devoted and pious lives.

A number of interesting scenes must have occurred while the Sisters were being initiated into the customs of the country. The diary says:

"April 26. To-day our Sisters have gone to Terre Haute for the first time in the religious habit,"—six months after their arrival, so great was the prejudice against Religious in that non-Catholic settlement. But we are amused to read under date of June 1, 1841, "To-day we did our washing according to the American fashion," and then the details of that harrowing process are given so graphically that we can almost see them bewildered with the tubs and what not. One Sister writes to her friends at home, "Here in New York they make soup of oysters; it is deplorable." And another, this time in the West, "They eat potatoes here boiled in the skins." It was shocking. There was indeed little to gratify the palate in the frugality of their meals, yet He who feedeth the sparrow provided for His

own, or at least gave them an appetite that was very well pleased with "potatoes boiled in the skins." The country air was a good nervine, and all were happy in their poverty.

The first Independence Day in their adopted country was made memorable by the arrival of a pupil for the Academy. Of this event Mother Theodore writes: "July 4th, which is a Saturday, our first boarder arrives, whom we must keep although we are not yet ready. Her name is Mary L——. Glory to Mary, glory to our Mother, the ever-blessed Virgin!"

This was the Blessed Mary's land; would she not protect it? Did not its very name remind her continually that there was a special claim upon her maternal guardianship? We have previously mentioned Mother Theodore's devotion to the Blessed Virgin; it may be further remarked that she walked in the footsteps of Blessed Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort in the surrender she made of herself and all her work to "Mary, our mistress and our queen." "In the name of Mary and through the love of Mary" she offered all to God. In the midst of her many perplexities with loving confidence she could say, in the words of the same holy man, "I leave all to thee, my sweet Mother, in the name of the Father; I leave all to thee in the name of the Son; I leave all to thee in the name of the Holy Ghost; I leave all to thee in thy own sweet name, as God left all to thee in Jesus." It is gratifying to know that this devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which the Community cherishes at present as one of its most effective means for the formation of the interior spirit, was also known and practised by our holy foundress. Louis de Montfort himself says: "Mary

is a holy place and the Holy of Holies, where saints are formed and moulded. . . . Console yourselves and exult in having the secret which I teach you—a secret unknown to almost all Christians, even the most devout."

The book, "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin," is indeed a hidden treasure. It was known and understood and practised somewhat in France when the Community was founded, but its introduction into America belongs to a much later period. Father Faber says: "Those who take him [de Montfort] for their master will hardly be able to name a saint or ascetic writer to whose grace and spirit their minds will be more subject than to his. . . . Mary must bring Jesus to every soul that has Him not—to the individual, to the family, and to society. The world must know her sublime dignity, her grand agency in the mystery of our redemption, . . . her part in the salvation of every one of us. . . . Thousands of souls perish because Mary is withheld from them. It is the miserable, unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the saints, God is pressing for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to His blessed Mother. I cannot think of a higher work or a broader vocation for any one than the simple spreading of this peculiar devotion of the venerable Grignon de Montfort. Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it and the transformations it causes in the soul will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy, as a means for the salvation of men and for the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Oh, if

Mary were but known, how much more wonderful would be our faith, and how different our Communions would be! Oh, if Mary were but known, how much happier, how much holier, how much less worldly should we be, and how much more should we be living images of our sole Lord and Saviour, her dearest and most blessed Son."

On the fifth of July, 1841, the Academy was blessed by the chaplain, Father Buteux, assisted by Father Parret, who was then in charge of the parish of St. Mary's. A brief discourse followed, and the ceremonies were closed with hymns of thanksgiving.

The register shows on the next day the arrival of four pupils. After a Mass of the Holy Ghost, classes were opened in both English and French, the former under the care of Sister Aloyse, the latter under the direction of Sister Basilide, Mother Theodore herself superintending. This arrangement lasted till after the retreat, which closed August 19th, when Sister St. Vincent Ferrer was appointed Superior of the Academy.

About the middle of July Mother Theodore went to Vincennes to witness the consecration of the cathedral. There she learned the Bishop's intention to remove Father Buteux from the chaplaincy at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. The cause of this change may be inferred from a letter of the Bishop written six months before, in which he says:

I did not write to you, my good Mother, during your retreat, fearing to disturb your recollection. My words, unlike those of Rev. A. Martin, have not always the good fortune of being words of peace, of diffusing into souls the sweet perfume of virtue; too often, alas! when I did not intend it, they have appeared harsh and severe. Your

letters are indeed very good; they breathe sentiments of attachment for the poor Bishop of Vincennes, of confidence, of submission, which he fully appreciates. I am so much the more pleased at these good dispositions, and they cause me so much the more satisfaction, because of the efforts that have been made to inspire you with the contrary sentiments. I had less reason to hope, to expect from you and your daughters things so amiable. I beg of God, who alone can turn our hearts toward things that are good, to increase still more and consolidate between us this harmony, and to make it redound to His greater glory.

Father Martin informed me in detail of that which, by a delicacy that does you great credit, you simply mention in your letter. This shows me that with the best will in the world there is not always a good understanding, and that the most pure zeal must have its limits. We *will*, we *understand*, we *do* good only imperfectly. It would be much more deplorable if to the imperfection of our nature, such as sin has made it, we were to add the susceptibilities of self-love and positive malice. Happily this has not been the case with you; nevertheless, for the greater good of your house, and that nothing similar may happen again, I shall write to Father Buteux some matters I perceive necessary to recall to his mind. I thought I had expressed myself clearly and positively before, but it seems not. Father B—— is your chaplain, nothing more; it is not his duty, as he thinks, to form your subjects. His office is to administer the sacraments to them; anything beyond that would not be according to your Rules. However, I imposed upon him one thing more—an instruction once a week to the Community.

These restrictions not being in harmony with Father Buteux's disposition led to his removal, which caused

deep regret, for he was a very able and devoted priest, and loved the Community.

Mother Theodore had insisted on one condition before consenting to undertake the Indiana foundation, and that was, that the Community should have the daily privilege of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The removal of the chaplain now made her fear that the promise she had obtained was going to be withdrawn, particularly since no one had been appointed to replace him, and they would have to depend for the time being on the charity of the neighboring clergy. It was this that caused her to be apprehensive, and which called forth some words of rebuke from her Bishop. These were followed, however, by more encouraging lines, and ended with:

You see I am hungry for news about you. It is because my thoughts, my desires are for your good. I beg of God to make your daughters understand all that there is of affection, of good-will, and of esteem for them in the heart of the poor Bishop. I bless them with all my heart. . . . The Brothers will come very soon, and with them our dear Irma.

These last words were full of consolation for Mother Theodore; for to have the assurance that Irma Le Fer de la Motte would come to join her was enough to render her oblivious, at least temporarily, of all her anxieties and difficulties. Two years had nearly elapsed since Mlle. Le Fer de la Motte had gone to Soulaines to become acquainted with her whom she intended to accompany to Indiana; nearly two years since Mother Theodore had conducted her from Soulaines to the novitiate at Ruillé-sur-Loire. It often happens that there

exists a sympathy in souls by which they understand each other at the first meeting, a sympathy which further acquaintance confirms, and, as it were, moulds two hearts into one; this was the case with Mother Theodore and Sister St. Francis Xavier (Irma Le Fer de la Motte). The happiness of being associated with the Sisters appointed to the Indiana mission, which Irma expected in going to Ruillé-sur-Loir, was to be deferred, however, on account of her exceeding frail health. This was a bitter trial to both, and Irma would never have gone to Ruillé had she foreseen that she would be detained there, for she had pledged herself to Bishop de la Hailandière. She tells her parents of her disappointment:

I have had the pleasure of seeing again my dear Sister Theodore. I cannot tell you what feelings agitated us. We were very reasonable, however, hoping to see each other again next year.

When the Sisters had left France, her next letter says:

I was calm until the end; but afterwards I had an attack of resignation to the holy will of God.

Her hope was soon to be realized now, and a new happiness was thus reserved for the sorely tried foundress.

When Irma learned that she was to go to Vincennes she hastened to inform her father. July 14, 1841, she wrote:

God is going to grant me the greatest grace He can bestow,—the privilege to take my vows before starting for America. Thank Our Lord for His incomprehensible love for me. . . . My vows and Vincennes, oh! it is too much

for a miserable creature like me! *Misericordias Domĭni in æternum cantabo.*

For further details of this remarkable child of grace the reader is referred to the "Life and Letters of Sister St. Francis Xavier," written by her sister, Clementine Le Fer Corbinière. We shall now speak only of the delight it was to Mother Theodore to have the near prospect of being reunited to her Irma. She seemed to know in advance what it meant to her and to the little family gathering around her. Everything changed color in the light of this new joy, and in the midst of her tears she exclaimed: "My God, how sweetly tender are Thy mercies! Make me worthy of her, and of all whom Thou hast chosen, for this is Thy work. But who am I? Ah! who am I? Thou, O Lord, art all."

## CHAPTER XVI.

SISTER ST. FRANCIS XAVIER IN AMERICA.—MADAME GALLITZIN GIVES HER HOSPITALITY AT THE SACRED HEART CONVENT, NEW YORK CITY.—THE BROTHERS OF THE HOLY CROSS ARE FOUNDED AT SAINT-PETER'S, IND., BY FATHER SORIN, C.S.C.—MOTHER THEODORE PETITIONS TO BE RELIEVED OF THE OFFICE OF SUPERIOR.—HER RESIGNATION REFUSED.—ARRIVAL OF SISTER ST. FRANCIS AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.—MOTHER MARY CECILIA.—MOTHER ANASTASIA.—REV. N. PERCHÉ'S VISIT.

EXPECTATION soon changed to happy realization. In sight of New York, Sister St. Francis wrote thus to her beloved friend and future Mother:

September 13, 1841.

God be praised! I hoped to be able to pronounce these words with you, and to be myself the bearer of the news of my arrival. Well, again, God be blessed for this delay! No doubt it is for my good that He keeps me here. We had a very favorable voyage, which, however, did not prevent me from being twenty-six days in such a state of prostration that no one thought I should live. I fear my journey from New York will carry off the remainder of my strength, so that you will receive me in all my misery. Poor dear Mother, you will not be long in finding out what a burden you have wished for; but it is God who sends me and He is willing to accept me such as I am. This good Saviour, Jesus, oh, how I shall endeavor to please

Him, to thank Him for having kept for me my beautiful vocation for Vincennes! I do not know what He will be able to do with me, for I cannot see for what part of His service I am fit, unless that at St. Mary's they build with reeds. My good Mother, if I am wanting in strength and in virtue, at least I come to offer to you, as to one who holds the place of God in my regard, my good-will, my whole life; receive all, for I only come to obey God in everything and everywhere. I thank you in advance for the prayers you will offer for me, and also for all those you have no doubt offered for me since we parted. I was truly in great need of strength from God; and you, too, have been obliged to hide yourself in the mercies of the Lord. How much you must have suffered during this year! If I could regret anything in having done the will of God it would be not to have gone with you to share with our Sisters their uneasiness, their distresses, all the pains of their first trials; but God saw that I was too weak for such favors, so He waited. Besides, I suppose that you have not taken all the crosses in Indiana, so that some will remain for me.

There was yet to be anxious waiting for two months before they should meet each other in their forest home with the greeting

*Vive Jésus dans nos cœurs,*

the first ejaculation in the morning, the last at night. Sister St. Francis Xavier was taken to the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in New York City, where the hospitality of Madame Gallitzin was a never-ceasing source of gratitude to her and to the Community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. The princess, Madame Gallitzin, had opened her establishment there only a few months previously. As

she intended going to Saint-Louis in about a fortnight she suggested that Sister St. Francis should wait to accompany her as far as Evansville. This very gracious and wise proposal could not be rejected with either grace or propriety, for had Sister St. Francis continued her journey at once she would have been under the embarrassment of travelling in a company of men, as the Ladies of the Sacred Heart who were her companions across the ocean were destined to remain in the East. Moreover, a period in which to recuperate seemed necessary. All who saw the frail young Religious were awestruck at the courage and fervor, if not rashness, that urged her to undertake the great journey to the West. Had those been the days of rapid transit in palace-cars the case would have been different,—two days of comfortable travel would have been only a pleasure trip,—but there had been little change in the ways and means since the Sisters had travelled the route a year before. Mother Theodore was not sorry, then, that her future daughter would yet be kept from her several weeks longer, nor had Sister St. Francis Xavier any cause to regret the delay.

Mr. Beyerly, the gentleman who had proved so kind a friend to Mother Theodore and her Sisters when they landed at New York, attended to the comfort of the Brothers who made the voyage at the same time as Sister St. Francis. The Brothers had a very short delay in the East, as arrangements had been made for them to proceed directly to Saint-Peter's, Ind., where they made a foundation. Speaking of Mr. Beyerly, Sister St. Francis said: "Eight days ago he made his abjuration, and he is almost as fervent as M. Dupont."

In recounting the favors vouchsafed her by divine

Providence during her travels from Ruillé-sur-Loir to Vincennes, after stating the privilege of being in company with the Religious of the Sacred Heart and the Brothers of the Holy Cross, conducted by the great Father Sorin, C.S.C., Sister St. Francis added with reverent enthusiasm the favor of having travelled one night in a stage with the Holy Man of Tours, M. Dupont. Her own words will tell us better than any others her appreciation of this privilege.

We spent the night as if at the gate of heaven. We spoke continually of Jesus and Mary. He is twenty-five times more devout than I am. After the beads he made me say a great many *Aves* for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of persons in whom he was specially interested. Then from eleven o'clock till midnight we made the Way of the Cross on an indulgenced crucifix. We took turns in meditating aloud. When he proposed it I thought it would make me laugh, or, if I had beautiful thoughts, that it would inspire me with vanity. Ah! dear Mother, if you could know what depth of faith and love, with simplicity, there is in the heart of this man! Instead of laughing, I wept. We could not tear ourselves away from the Cross of Jesus, at the foot of which we found Mary His Mother. . . . He is a saint, an angel, whom God has sent me on my journey to sustain me, but also to humiliate me, for I am a worm before his sublime faith and profound humility.

These unexpected meetings of holy souls occur occasionally in the lives of the saints, and seem to be the happy events to which is attached a unique and inexpressible grace which the soul never forgets. The impression of this fortuitous meeting was to Sister St. Francis

Xavier very like that which the holy Father Surin relates of himself after travelling three days in the stage, not indeed with a jurisconsult of established fame, but with an illiterate servant, of whom the reverend father says: "He was filled with all kinds of grace, and with such exalted heavenly gifts that I have never yet seen his equal. Until he asked me to hear his confession I questioned whether he was not an angel in human form."

M. Dupont was strongly impressed with the capabilities for divine things which he discovered in his fervent travelling companion. Thence was begun a correspondence with the Sisters of Providence at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, which they esteemed as one of their greatest privileges and pleasures. The Holy Man of Tours evinced deep interest in their missionary labors, and reverenced, as he said, a body in which there were such favored souls as that of his late companion. He admired her intellectual culture, her ready wit, her keen insight, but above all her spiritual expansiveness, beside which all that one ordinarily sees in a devout life seemed but the shadow of sanctity. This was certainly very high praise for one so lately initiated into the ways of religious life, and the testimony was valued all the more, coming as it did from one who was reputed singularly gifted himself and a very enlightened and holy man. It takes holiness to discern holiness in others. Mother Theodore was well aware of her daughter's eminent perfections, but it was a deep gratification to know that M. Dupont recognized in Sister St. Francis Xavier a soul particularly favored with special graces, whose work was unimpeded, and which gave promise of great sanctity. To Father Sorin, who was also in the company, but in another

compartment of the coach, when Sister St. Francis and M. Dupont spent their happy night conversing of God, he wrote three years later: "I shall send a copy of this beautiful work ('Life of Marie Eustelle') to my dear Sister St. Francis Xavier. She will understand and appreciate the great love of Marie Eustelle for our good Saviour Jesus. How happy should I be could I induce a soul as strong as that of Sister F. X. to join in your work; but such a soul as hers we rarely meet."

We can understand now with what solicitude Mother Theodore awaited the arrival of her future colaborer, the very complement of herself. The work was God's own work which Providence ordained should require their co-operation. The spiritual friendship thus contracted became a bond of strength that no natural force could, no natural power would, break, for it had been foreordained and its consummation was but the will of God.

In the meantime a letter dated, Le Mans, August 5, 1841, arrived at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods from Canon Lottin, a great friend of the Community, who did much toward having the Rules of the Congregation in France approved by the Holy See, to effect which he remained in Rome with M. Levrot, the chaplain of Ruillé, almost a year. After thanking Mother Theodore for her letter of May 25, 1841, he continues:

It was a real pleasure for me to be again among you all, at least in imagination, to know in detail what has happened to you, and thus to share in the fears, hopes, disappointments, contradictions, and little consolations which you have experienced in succession; for we are so constituted that we prefer to know what has happened to those we love, even if it be something painful, rather than to re-

main in doubt in this respect. . . . Your letter brought me a new gratification; it may be only an illusion, but it seems to me I foresee the end of your difficulties and uncertainties. Your establishment is not yet consolidated; this is only too true, unfortunately; nevertheless I see that it will become so, and it will develop itself. Have confidence—time will do the rest. Great enterprises, and yours is a great one, cannot be accomplished all at once. You must have patience; plant and water. God will give the increase at the moment marked out in His eternal decrees, and which is not always that which we, with our weak foresight, had arranged. Yes, Daughters of Providence, have confidence in Providence, and Providence will not abandon you. If it is not granted you to put the last touch to the work, God will raise up others who will succeed you and who will continue what you will have commenced. The having had courage to begin will be most meritorious. In your return to life and health there is something providential, considering the state in which you have been. It is because God wishes you to labor still at His work that He has restored you. So, then, be courageous; but at the same time do not fail to consider as one of your most essential duties that of taking a reasonable care of your health; this is the order of God as well as of nature. Without being attached to life more than is right, we are obliged to avoid all that would shorten its course, as far as we are able. We must not present ourselves to God before He calls us; hence, my dear child, endeavor to preserve the little strength you have, so that should ill health return and increase, you may always have the assurance that it is through no fault of yours.

Good Sister St. Francis leaves this evening to join you. I rejoice in the happiness you will have in her arrival. However feeble in health. I hope God will bless her cour-

ageous intentions, and that she will assist you to carry the heavy burden under which God will not permit you to give way. Let us bless Heaven for thus sending you help at the moment that you stand so much in need of it. Sister will be a great acquisition for your Community. I have the consolation of seeing her start under circumstances less disquieting than those under which you departed. Since God had pity on you, I hope that He will protect her likewise. But I would be still much better pleased if Sister St. Francis did not have to go alone; so would Mother Mary, but she cannot possibly do otherwise. The needs of the Congregation, of which I am fully cognizant, give me this assurance; hence the good that one cannot do must be left undone. On your side there will be the same necessity, for, in a word, we cannot do what we cannot; impossibilities are required of no one. Mother Mary speaks of these matters in her letters to you, therefore I abstain from further remarks on the subject; but if it is possible for me to be useful to your establishment at any time, rest assured I shall be happy to receive your commands. . . Thus far I have not spoken to you of your companions, yet I have not forgotten one of them. They are as present to my mind and heart, and especially before God in prayer, as on the day of your departure from Mans. . .

When you have some leisure moments write to me. Whatever regards you all and your home will be of the greatest interest to me. I am become quite *American* since our good Sisters adopted the New World for their home. If a revolution comes to drive me out of France I shall take refuge at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, and will be, not your almoner, for you have one, but your chaplain. Why not? Stranger things than this have happened. In the meantime let us endeavor continually to sanctify ourselves.

The good-will and kind remembrance of her friends in France was always a happy thought for Mother Theodore and her brave-hearted companions. The repeated expressions of encouragement that these letters contain were not because complaints or lack of courage had been manifested by them, but because, knowing the circumstances, knowing also human sensibility and the tendency of hearts like our own, sufferings, trials, and temptations were the attendants of the lot they had chosen. It was thus by supposition rather than by acknowledgments that the secret of their hearts was divulged, although in all simplicity they rendered an accurate account to their Superiors of the state of affairs in their new home, and concealed very little perhaps of the pain they experienced in their isolation. Mother Theodore had even begged of Mother Mary to send some one to replace her, to give, as she said, a competent head to direct the work. Bishop de la Hailandière, it seems, despite his protestations of fatherly interest, had manifested some disappointment in regard to her administration. This decided her to proffer her resignation, fearing to be a stumbling-block to souls. But her resolution appeared to grieve him. Concerning it he wrote:

After all, for a Religious there is one sure way which leads to God, and apart from which there can be no virtue; that way is obedience. I do not retract one word of my last letter. I say more: in virtue of holy obedience, not only do I forbid you to leave, and thus make you responsible before God and men for the consequence of your departure, should it take place; but I command you not even to think of leaving. Observe that I have the right

to impose this command; and further notice, that whatever be the motive upon which your resignation has been urged or judged necessary, I also, and more than any one else, have the right to judge of it.

The Superiors in France did not accept Mother Theodore's resignation; they knew it was but a suggestion of her humility. The question was then definitely settled; Mother Theodore was to remain Superior General of the Sisters of Providence at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, hence no one was sent to Indiana with Sister St. Francis to replace her.

It was the Feast of St. Gertrude that brought these two hearts together again; and what a happy day it was for both! Mother Theodore notes the feast in a letter to Madame Le Fer de la Motte, and says: "After all this I must add this reunion of hearts in the Heart of Our Lord took place on the feast-day of that fond lover of the Heart of Jesus, our dear sweet St. Gertrude. It will henceforth be one of our cherished anniversaries, increasing our devotion to the saint."

Sister St. Francis arrived at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods bearing kind messages and little tokens of remembrance from friends in France. The most precious of these was from Canon Lottin. His letter tells what it was.

I avail myself of this opportunity to send you a small pious souvenir. In the Church of the Holy Cross in Rome one of the nails which served at the crucifixion of Our Lord is preserved. I had the consolation of seeing it, of having it in my hand, of venerating it. No particles are taken from the precious relic, but sometimes nails which are exactly like the original, and which have touched it, are given as souvenirs. One of these nails I now send

you, with all the seals and authentics. This I hope will please you and your companions. It will help you to bear in mind when you have much to suffer that another has suffered still more, not for Himself but for us all.

A few days after her arrival Sister St. Francis began to give lessons in drawing and Latin; a little later she was charged with the care of the novices, which enabled Mother Theodore to give more attention to the Academy. Every new pupil was presented to Mother Theodore, at which time she "measured her," using her own words; then at the monthly reading of the reports she observed every detail in the children's deportment and improvement, or the contrary, as the case might be, and followed each in her course with an attention that bespoke her truly maternal solicitude, and indicated the high appreciation she had of souls.

St. Mary's Institute was begun on the same lines as the collegiate institutes of France. Higher education for women was its primary object. The charter granted in 1846 by the Indiana legislature showed clearly the nature of this institution, and recognized the efficiency of its faculty in that it granted to St.-Mary-of-the-Woods all the rights and privileges of chartered institutions, and empowered it to confer collegiate degrees whenever students were judged ready to receive them. At first sight it might seem strange that so advanced a course of instruction should have been proposed in the beginning, when the great majority were ignorant of the rudiments; but it shows that deep penetration into the future which characterized and decided the foundress in her provisional measures. She had caught in advance the spirit of the century's later progress, even though

few understood it as she did, and everything was viewed by her from that vantage-point.

God seemed to give open sanction of all her efforts by sending her subjects of rare talent. Only a few days after Sister St. Francis Xavier reached the goal of her holy ambitions another promising postulant arrived; this was Eleanor Bailey, who, as Mother Mary Cecilia, was destined to succeed the foundress in the office of Superior General, while at the Academy a pupil was entered who was to become the third Superior General of the Congregation—Mother Anastasia.

The Christmas of 1841 brought to the Sisters at St. Mary's the joyous surprise of a visit from Rev. N. Perché, of Portland, Kentucky. He brought two postulants to Mother Theodore's little family and remained ten days, during which time he gave a daily instruction to the Community on the formation of the religious spirit. Mother Theodore could not express her gratitude for this great kindness on the part of Father Perché. It was the beginning of a life-long intimate friendship between the foundress of St. Mary's and the future Archbishop of New Orleans; the beginning, likewise, of a chain of favors received through the esteemed prelate's lively interest and efficient influence. To him the Sisters were indebted for many of their books and pictures; their chapel also owed some of its furnishings to his generosity. The first letter received from this estimable and revered friend after his visit is dated,

EVANSVILLE, Jan. 8, 1842.

May the peace of God live in your heart, my good Mother and very dear Daughter:

You will be surprised to receive a letter from me so soon. I am surprised myself, and agreeably so. Last Thursday

I saw the Bishop of Vincennes. He inquired about you and your house with deep interest, as did also M. Shaw, M. Corbe, and M. Lalumière, who were there at the time. All appeared sincerely interested in your success. I remained a long time with the Bishop. We spoke much of you and your Community, . . . the substance of our conversation revolving around the question as to what I thought of your establishment. My reply was that I was astonished you had done so much in so short a time; that the place pleased me very much, the improvements having been made with taste and judgment; and that the number of pupils and novices whom you have had in so brief a time is a good augury for the Community and the boarding-school.

As to forming another establishment, although it did not seem proper for me to give advice, I was of the opinion that if one goes too fast in making establishments, the same inconveniences would result as in many other Communities, where in this way the religious spirit was injured. The Bishop answered that although he greatly desired to make several establishments, he wished still more to have fervent Religious animated with the spirit of their vocation. You see, my dear daughter, the lines you should follow on this subject.

Many details of his journey as to weather, inconveniences, and delays, besides poor health, are related in this letter, after which he concludes by saying:

I transport myself in spirit to your pretty little chapel at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, uniting myself in heart with you and your dear daughters, who pray with so much fervor, beseeching Our Lord that He would let fall on my poor soul some drops of those graces which He showers in torrents upon those souls, so pure and so well prepared to

receive them. Recommend me to their prayers, as also to M. Parret.

My very dear daughter, may the blessed Virgin Mary extend her maternal protection over you and yours.

Believe that I am, more deeply than I can say,

Yours devotedly in J. C.,

N. J. Perché.

The advice above given, regarding the sending out of subjects from the novitiate before they had become well acquainted with the duties of the religious life and had acquired its spirit, was perfectly consonant with Mother Theodore's views. It strengthened her resolution to proceed slowly in view of future results; but, as we shall see later, it cost her many a hard struggle, and sometimes her heart was wrung by the conflict. It was not until after another year had passed that we find her consenting to open a school, details of which are reserved for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XVII.

NEW FOUNDATIONS.— JASPER.— SAINT-FRANCISVILLE. — SAINT-PETER'S.—1842–1843.

"We will send Sisters to you in the month of March, as you desire," wrote Mother Theodore to the Rev. Joseph Kundek, of Jasper, "but I should be so happy could you wait until the Feast of St. Joseph, to have the ceremony of installation on that day. It would be a great consolation for us to place our first branch establishment under the protection of this great saint, who is a patron of our Congregation."

Rev. Father Kundek graciously acceded to her request. The Feast of St. Joseph was also very dear to him, as he bore the saint's name, and he was glad of the occasion to honor his patron in a special way. Sister St. Vincent Ferrer was appointed to open the mission; two young Sisters were to be associated with her. With a simplicity deeply appreciative of the pastor's generosity, Mother Theodore's letter continues:

I hope to see you soon to recommend to you in a particular manner the dear daughters whom we confide to you. May they promote the glory of God and respond to your zeal in behalf of your flock; this is my most ardent wish, and for this end we spare nothing, since we give you our dear Sister St. Vincent Ferrer, who is our assist-

ant, to form this establishment. The Sisters with her are also filled with piety and good-will. All leads us to hope that God will bless these first-fruits, even on the day chosen for their installation, which, by a happy coincidence, is Saturday, the day consecrated to the special veneration of Mary, our good Mother, and also St. Joseph's feast.

Mother Theodore accompanied the Sisters to Jasper, and on the 19th of March, 1842, the ceremonies of installation took place. The Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession through the streets by the Rt. Rev. Bishop, and the jubilant notes of the happy people rose in grateful homage to the accompaniment of Nature's voice in the beauty of her early spring life and the radiance of her sunshine. It was a glorious festival day, never forgotten by the devout foundress, whose tears mingled with her smiles, nor by the Sisters, whose humble simplicity made them the happiest participants, nor by the good people, whose little ones clung to the "angels" sent amongst them to tell them of God, His blessed Mother, and all the heavenly court.

It remained but to thank the pastor for his great efforts to have his school properly prepared. A comfortable dwelling was ready for the Sisters, surrounded by a large garden and an orchard; in fact there was nothing more to be desired in these respects. But Mother Theodore said to them: "You will have your crosses, my dear Sisters; you must have them. The flowers of virtue will not spring up and grow unless watered by the precious blood that falls from the pierced hands and feet and the open side of our crucified Saviour."

Prejudice was the form in which the cross came to

them at Jasper. The non-Catholics were intolerant, and many of the Catholics were weak in opposing their bigotry; some even showed a lamentable indifference in what concerned our holy religion, so that it was extremely difficult at first to get pupils enough to support the school. Mother Theodore endeavored to keep up the courage of all. To Father Kundek she wrote:

I cannot think St. Joseph will let your work fail. We are making a novena for you; it will end on the Feast of the Patronage. By that time I expect to have encouraging tidings from you. Please tell our dear Sisters that they know how interested everybody is at St. Mary's in our first establishment. Prayer must make it prosper. I know nothing will be wanting, as far as the good-will of the Sisters you have is concerned; and while they suffer from the coldness of those who ought to be devoted to them and contribute to the welfare of the mission, as long as they have daily Mass and the sacraments regularly, and experience your fatherly solicitude in many other ways which they recognize with gratitude, I do not fear that they will become discouraged or desire to discontinue their efforts.

Shortly after this letter to the anxious pastor, Mother Theodore wrote to the Sisters at Jasper:

Your letters have gladdened my heart and called forth more than one *Te Deum*, not for your victories, for you are not yet triumphant over your enemies, but for the sentiments you express. If, as you say, you would lay down your lives for the souls that must be won over to God, I am sure He will grant your prayer without requiring so great a sacrifice. You know, my dear daughters, that your position requires great circumspection. Carefully guard every word; watch over yourselves that nothing impru-

dent may escape and thus give the ill-disposed a reason for their complaints. You may have to wait longer than you would like, you may have to bear privations, but bear and forbear. Have confidence in the Providence that so far never has failed us. The way is not yet clear; grope along slowly; do not press matters; be patient; be trustful. I fully enter into all your difficulties; this is the same as telling you that I suffer with you. Need I tell you that I pray for you? Every thought of my dear Sisters in Jasper is a prayer. You are lonesome, of course, and so are we; but of this separation we do not complain. We cannot do our work if we all stay in the nest. As soon as the birds can fly they must be on the wing, looking after the interests of Our Saviour Jesus. We shall make no account of our personal feelings, except to sacrifice them. Say often, My God, I thank Thee that I have this to suffer. Offer it to Him, He will be pleased with your childlike simplicity; and rest assured, my dear daughters, if you lean with all your weight upon Providence you will find yourselves well supported. I approve of the practices you have imposed on yourselves in honor of St. Joseph. Pray, be humble, be charitable, and God's blessing will be with you. . . . We send you letters that came from France, knowing it would give you pleasure to share in our joys. Take good care of them and bring them home when you come to the retreat.

All our Sisters and postulants are praying for you; they join me in love to each one of you, and in kind regards to your esteemed pastor.

May Our Saviour Jesus Christ fill your hearts with His love; may the blessed Virgin Mary, our sweet Mother, have you in her holy keeping; may the angels guard and direct you. Love us all at home as we love you all, in the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Some of the principal difficulties were being surmounted with very great effort. However, the Sisters were gaining at Jasper, and now, as the time for the annual retreat approached, the pastor was loath to have the Sisters leave, fearing they would not be received back again. That was a sacrifice to which Mother Theodore could not easily resign herself, knowing the incomparable benefits of a good retreat. She claimed that there was all the greater need of one as the Sisters were so lately introduced into the ways of the religious life. The formation of an interior spirit, the essential principle of the spiritual life, is not the work of a short time, except in rare cases. She spoke of this in full to the Rev. Father Kundek, and succeeded in obtaining his consent for the return of her Sisters to St. Mary's to make the retreat in August.

In a later letter Mother Theodore again refers to the time it takes to form subjects to the religious spirit. It was owing to an appeal for another Sister that she wrote:

I have not a single person able now to fulfil your wishes. It is necessary that all should spend some time here to be instructed in the sciences, but above all to be formed in virtue. The great misfortune of Communities is their placing of subjects too soon on the missions. As for ourselves, who are foreigners, with limited knowledge of the language, you can understand that more time is required to instruct our novices, and that the first year of their novitiate was almost lost. Have a little patience with us and be convinced that the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and also the good of your house induce me to defer your request.

To the Superior at Jasper she wrote:

We shall do what depends on us to advance the interests of our dear Jesus, the Spouse of our souls and of His holy Church. After that let us remain in peace, for we are not called upon to do *all* the good that is *possible*, but only that which we *can* do.

On the point of desiring a long time of noviceship Mother Theodore is supported by the example of saints, notably of St. Basil and St. Gregory. The author of the Liturgical Year says of the latter: "Nor did the misery of those times cause him to fall into that error, so common nowadays, namely, that of wishing to devote oneself to others before first having regulated one's own soul. Such is not the true way of setting charity in order; such is not the conduct of the saints. No, it is thyself God wants before all things else. When thou art become His in the full measure He intends, He Himself will know how to bestow thee upon others, unless perchance He prefers for thy greater advantage to keep thee all for Himself. In any case He is no lover of all that hurry to become useful. He does not bless these would-be utilitarians who are all eagerness, as it were, to push themselves into the service of His providence; that which really tends to the extension of Our Lord's glory is not the amount of time given to the work, but the holiness of the worker."

Another important lesson contained in the above letter, and which she never ceased inculcating, might be advanced as the summing up of the obligations of all who are consecrated to the service of God—to "do all that depends on us to advance the glory of Jesus and of His holy Church, and after that to remain in peace." The first part is a broad injunction and should be the

subject of a daily conscientious scrutiny. The honor of Christ's Church is confided to consecrated souls, the advance guard; but it is not the slothful or indifferent that will shed lustre upon it; its glory, like the brightness of the day's luminary, comes from a hidden source. We see the rays of the sun, but the sun itself we do not behold; so the splendor that holiness imparts we behold in the glory of the Church, but the source is within the depths of souls hidden away from mortal gaze, seen only by the eye of God. *This is the will of God, your sanctification;*[1] personal sanctity, then, is the measure of our loyalty to holy Church, and the only consideration, in fact, of which cognizance is taken when there is question of conferring the honors of canonization upon those for whom the favor is sought.

The second part of the instruction—"after that remain in peace"—depends not so much on ourselves as does the prior injunction. As a rule, peace follows upon a sincere conscience;[2] yet as every rule has exceptions, experience proves that this also must bear qualification. Peace might sometimes be withheld from the heart as a further trial of its fidelity, to increase its manliness, or, what we can always safely think, in punishment for our negligences; but the soul with little or no fault of its own will not be abandoned long to disturbance of mind. *God is faithful,*[3] St. Paul tells us, and He rewards magnanimously. Ascetic writers say that next to sanctifying grace there is no greater benefit to the soul than peace; neither is there a more desirable

[1] Paul: 1 Thess. iv. 3.
[2] Imitation, Book I.
[3] Paul: 2 Thess. iii. 3.

experience. It is that which perfects the thought of heaven.

Holy souls are sometimes disquieted because they think they do not do enough for God. Their fervor is commendable; yet, in the words of the venerated foundress, in all things and always we must remain in peace. It was a precept she never wearied inculcating, and a lesson she had occasion to apply continually to herself, as amidst the vicissitudes through which her soul was passing there was much cause for perturbation. When a stone is thrown into the water the concentric waves will form; the stone sinks, however, and the waves disperse, leaving the surface smooth and beautiful as before. So it is with the soul when disturbances are caused; with time they dissipate themselves, and nothing is lost if St. Teresa's words are kept in mind—PATIENCE OVERCOMES ALL THINGS. The sovereign remedy, however, for mental agitation is prayer—*And being in an agony He prayed the longer.*[1]

This was the key to the secret of Mother Theodore's strength. No one would have judged that she had any anxieties, nor did she disclose them to her companions except very rarely. Their ignorance in this respect was their bliss, for she knew well that their sympathetic hearts would make her troubles their own, and though appreciative of the value of sufferings, she was too maternally tender to make them suffer. But she had her consolations too, and in these she made them share, so that there was scarcely a suspicion of any pain or anxiety under her calm and cheerful exterior.

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[1] Luke xxii. 43.

As yet there were no more than a dozen pupils at the Academy; this barely afforded them the means of existence, but the Sisters were hopeful. "God is good," they said; "more will come." And more did come. New subjects also continued to arrive, so that by the end of the second year it became necessary to enlarge the convent. This could be done without great expense, as logs from their own woods could be exchanged for lumber. A wing was therefore added to each side of the house, which gave to this pioneer home, called Little Providence, a convent-like appearance and needful accommodations for the growing community.

In the fall of the year 1842 it was considered possible to open another establishment, that of Saint-Francisville. Sister Mary Liguori and a young professed were to begin the mission. It was going to be a lonely enterprise, but they resolutely undertook it. There are no records in our possession of the early days in that new field of labor; but from some correspondence belonging to a later period we learn that insurmountable difficulties arose in opposition to their efforts. A year after the Sisters had opened this school the diocese of Chicago was formed and Saint-Francisville was included in the new diocese. Bishop de la Hailandière took this as a pretext for transferring the Sisters to Saint-Peter's, Indiana. A letter written soon after by Sister Mary Liguori to her Mother Superior, says:

I felt very sorry to leave Saint-Francisville, as we had the happiness of doing good there. This is the testimony of the Bishop himself, who came to the school, heard us question the children, thirty-three in number, of whom nineteen made their first Holy Communion and were confirmed on

July 30th. The change effected in them is admirable. We were too happy, dear Mother. When we returned after the retreat the children hastened to greet us, telling how lonesome they had been during our absence and asking if they should soon have the happiness of going to Holy Communion again. . . . But we had to leave them. The Bishop commanded us. God knows what is best. May we always accomplish His ever-adorable will.

Miracles of grace seem to have been accorded to those poor village people, and the good accomplished in one year was remarkable; it was therefore greatly against their inclination that the Sisters left Saint-Francisville.

Saint-Peter's was no improvement on the mission they had forsaken. Of their new situation Mother Theodore herself writes:

They occupy what was the original Mother House of the Brothers of St. Joseph (Holy Cross) in America. It is in the midst of the forest, a log house open to every breeze. The furniture consists of a table surrounded by old benches, two clothes-presses, two bedsteads equally fine, one chair made of the bark of trees and one of common wood. This is all, with a few kitchen utensils. Had I been there I should not have had the courage to allow them to pass the winter in such a house. I cannot conceive how the good Brothers could have lived there for a year. I think they must have left behind them their spirit of poverty, for when I proposed to the Sisters that they should quit their old shed and return to St. Mary's, these poor dear children pressed me so urgently and extolled so highly the happiness of their position and the good they could do and had already done, that I decided upon leaving them there until the retreat. Three of the principal personages of the borough came also as deputies

from the Congregation, to entreat me not to take away the Sisters. However, if after the month of August they are not rich enough to repair the log hut, buy a lock for the door, and some bedding, I shall order their removal. Imagine how heartily we laughed in the evening when, before retiring to what we called our dormitory, we were obliged to place the furniture against the door, because it possessed neither catch nor lock.

It must be said to the credit of the good people that this utter destitution was due to the eccentricities of the Reverend pastor, who believed that the customs of the apostolic age must be renewed, and that as our blessed Lord sent His apostles without staff or scrip, the disciples of Jesus should not now be better equipped.

When Mother Theodore visited Saint-Peter's the classes she was present at gave her much pleasure. The pupils in general were well-disposed and docile. After addressing encouraging words to the children, and to their parents who flocked to the school that day to see the *Bonne Mère*, she gave them a half holiday; and to afford the Sisters a little recreation, she took them all with her to Jasper. We will listen again to her own words:

The tulip-trees, the dogwood, the catalpa covered with white flowers like so many censers worthy to be swung before the presence of God under the gigantic naves of the boundless temples,—I cannot conceive anything more charming than that perfumed snowy fleece of blossoms intermingled with the delicate green of the thickly clustered trees. Wild lianas climb to the tops of the loftiest oaks and then fall down in festoons of every shape, only to recommence upon the ground a new life, thence again

to mount in other flights. Justly is this part of the globe named the New World, for all nature teems here almost to excess, if we may say so, with youth and life. Man, the last guest invited to behold these marvels, has not yet left the mark of his hand upon them. Animals of every kind are the quiet possessors of these lands, and the woodland songsters have undisputed claims. The cardinal, the bluebird, the humming-bird, and a multitude besides, willingly remain in the neighborhood of men whose regal sway, if they recognize it at all, seems to them remarkably gracious and gentle. Even the stag and the roe witness their approach without fear. There is one creature, however, whose confidence we would gladly dispense with; that is the serpent. There are specimens here of a multitude of different colors and sizes. . . . Terrifying as the serpents are, I must add that we have another plague still more disagreeable. I know not if there be a Pharaoh in the country; but we are overwhelmed, harassed, and almost devoured by the mosquitoes, against which *powers of the air* our only defence is a thick smoke which fairly suffocates us.

As the æsthetic sense is perfected by the perception of the beautiful, a drive through the country was always a source of great enjoyment to Mother Theodore. We cannot, then, agree with that greatly beloved Englishman (Father Faber) when he says that a Frenchman's scenic descriptions are tame because he has not sufficient sympathy with external nature to analyze it. Possibly some persons might be so unsympathetic, as every rule has exceptions, but our French nuns at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods did not belong to the exceptions. There was never a letter from their new home that did not give expression to their admiration, their rapturous

enjoyment, their participated delight in nature's loveliness. Add to this the special pleasure of roaming through tangled paths on a day in lovely May with companions responsive to her soul's buoyancy, and equally responsive to the love that made her recognize in the delicate beauty of the clinging vine or the majestic sturdiness of the forest monarch the Providence that

"So sweetly inclineth to every sense
And gives wherewith to charm in woodland dense."

Like St. Francis of Assisi, of whom St. Bonaventure writes, Mother Theodore rejoiced in all the works of God's hands, and by the glory and beauty of that mirror, rose to the Principle and Cause of them all. In all things fair she beheld Him who is most fair, finding her way to her Beloved by His footsteps in created things, and, with inexpressible devotion, enjoying that fountain of goodness flowing forth through all creatures, as in so many strains of nature's music.

After this visit to Jasper we find Mother Theodore writing:

The Congregation is a very fervent one. During the six months that the pastor had been absent the good Germans who composed it were wont to come seven or eight miles to sing hymns in the church. Thursday last, which was Ascension Day, we saw a whole parish that had walked more than ten miles in procession. They were in double file, the cross being carried at the head by a young man. Arrived at the church they assisted at Mass and then listened to two sermons, the first in English, the other in German, so that the services were not ended until nearly two o'clock. I confess I was much fatigued myself, and I will add to my shame, that my fervor was put

to the blush when I saw those true and sincere Christians begin again their pious procession. The entire parish, as though they were a body of musicians, set out on their homeward course, chanting hymns and sacred songs.

We who have the privilege of daily Mass and Communion can understand the privation of being six months, as the Sisters were during Father Kundek's trip to Europe, without either, except at rare intervals when a missionary would be passing by. Spiritual privations are always more keenly felt than any others by those who have devoted themselves to a life of piety, but *he that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven.* It was in this promise that the brave Sisters found strength, even when their souls were famishing for the Bread of angels. These sacrifices, moreover, did not make them love their work any the less. In another letter of a later date we see their attachment for this their first mission. It was written in answer to a request made by the pastor and explains itself fully. Mother Theodore here says:

It is with keen regret that we feel ourselves obliged not to admit the conditions which you propose for your establishment, because they are contrary to our Rules and to the usages we have adopted for our houses of America. For three years we have been acting only tentatively; it is time now to come to something positive for our missions. The great desire we have of seconding your zeal, the spiritual affection which we entertain towards the good people whom you direct, the attachment, quite maternal, which we feel for this mission, which is our eldest daughter, causes us to depart as much as possible from the common Rule in favor of your work; you will see this by the explanation of our conditions.

Then follow the conditions which the Superiors felt could be accepted, to which are appended copious reasons and explanations of local interest. The letter concludes:

We should be extremely grieved if you would not be able to comply with our wishes; for, again, we love the mission of Jasper very much, yet we believe we ought not to give the Sisters to it if we cannot fulfil our other duties; so then the future of this house is in your hands. See before God what you can do.

The worthy priest to whom this letter was addressed was too good a friend, too truly a man of God to take umbrage at its contents. Disappointed, perhaps, he knew that the common good could not be sacrificed for individual benefits. His reply must have been very kind and indulgent, judging from the next letter of Mother Theodore addressed to him, in which she says:

I thank you very much for the charity you have had in giving me the holy counsels which your letter contained. Obtain for me now by your prayers that I may put them in practice. How much I stand in need of help from above! . . . It is a great comfort for me to find so satisfactory all the arrangements you have made. Our gratitude cannot well be told, but our prayers for you shall never fail; we owe a great debt to him who is our first benefactor in Indiana. May the good God reward you in the way of His munificence! Continue, I beg you, to assist us by your charitable counsels and your prayers, that God's glory may not suffer because of our imperfections.

Several years were required to settle matters in a way that would insure permanency to this their first foundation. It awakened much solicitude on the part of the

foundress, who always spoke tenderly of her attachment to this first branch establishment. At one time she wrote:

"Never will I forget the happiness I experienced the first time in this country when assisting at one of your feasts. Jasper brings to my mind my dear France, at least Brittany."

At another writing she said:

"I have always had a sort of predilection for Jasper;" then with great sorrow she recounts reasons for not being able to continue the mission unless conditions should change. As long as the original pastor remained there was nothing to fear; his fatherly kindness never faltered; but he was going to leave the diocese and return to Europe, which was tantamount to breaking up the school, so largely did the parish share of his bounty. The people were very poor. The Mother House had been obliged most of the time to furnish clothing to the Sisters, as there was no remuneration for their services, except their daily living. "Your absence from Jasper has proved to me that this house cannot support itself," Mother Theodore said to Father Kundek; and again, "I cannot tell you how much your project pre-occupies me. I dread the arrival of the month of May; yet for this I reproach myself, for can anything befall us except what is good and right in the month set apart to honor our blessed Mother? I pray for you with all my heart; pray also for me that my presence may contribute to the glory of God and the salvation of souls which have been bought at so great a price. O good Father, be pleased to remain in this little corner of Our Lord's vineyard, which, by your

care and the dew that Heaven sends down upon it, is so flourishing; yes, remain to continue the work of a good vine-dresser."

Mother Theodore's solicitude disappeared in the month of Our Lady, when satisfactory arrangements were made with the trustees and the school property transferred to the Sisters of Providence. Mother Theodore returned to St. Mary's consoled and very happy, blessing the providence of God for leaving her her first establishment. Her diary for the month of May closed with these beautiful words: "Glory to Mary, by whom all this has come to us! Glory to Mary forever! Amen."

Jasper and the surrounding country gave to the Sisterhood of Providence some of its earliest and most devoted subjects, among them being Sister Mary James, for many years associated with the tutorial staff of the Academy at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

She is the only surviving representative of that locality which had so endeared itself to the heart of Mother Theodore, who, in noting her arrival, says: "If she perseveres, through her means we shall be enabled to do something special for the honor and glory of God and His glorious Mother. My God, grant that we may all fulfil Thy holy will!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

TRIALS FROM TROUBLESOME SUBJECTS.—THE ACADEMY LOSES MANY PUPILS OWING TO EVIL REPORTS —NEW MISSIONS PROPOSED.—EDIFYING INCIDENTS

WHENEVER there is question of a great good, the preparation for it extends over a long period. God's works have proved this to be the law. And there is another equally evident, namely, that whether the force be collective or individual the spiritual preparation is made with the "hammer of humiliations." Frequent illnesses and bodily sufferings, the humiliation of the flesh; frequent contradictions, the humiliation of the intellect;—in both these ways was Mother Theodore sternly exercised.

Some of the vexations and sufferings incident to the first year have been related; another will now be told which was the cause of much annoyance and concern to the Sisters at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Among the four postulants that awaited the arrival of the Sisters when they first came to Indiana there was one who had been a Religious in another order. She left her own Community upon learning that Sisters were coming to the diocese of Vincennes, actuated, as she said, by motives of greater good. The Sisters from France would naturally have to contend with difficulties from not knowing the language and the customs of the country, and this

Sister, judging how useful she might be to them, apparently made a sacrifice of her Community ties to give herself to a new mission where her services, she maintained, would be more valuable than in her own order, which was well supplied with subjects. By her artful piety she imposed upon the Bishop, who accepted her in the hope of having one who would be able to take matters in hand at once and direct the English department of the Academy. She was regarded by him as a great acquisition, and such was the opinion entertained of her sanctity that for a time she was considered another St. Teresa. It was part of her plan to be placed in authority over all the Sisters, even the Mother Foundress, and in this position serve as a medium between the Community and the people. To this the Bishop promptly objected, but as a compromise he requested that Sister Aloyse—her name in the Community—should share the authority of the Mother Superior and be next to her in rank. When Mother Theodore was made acquainted with Bishop de la Hailandière's wishes, she signified her willingness to renounce her position entirely, not because she trusted the Sister's sincerity and ability, but because she did not want it understood that she was anxious to retain her authority; moreover she hoped this would give satisfaction to the Bishop, who was much taken with the Sister. Mother Theodore saw through the strange novice in a very short time; but in this very delicate situation, she left her in charge of the Bishop and kept him informed minutely of everything regarding her. Sister Aloyse, imagining that her lungs needed treatment, requested that she might spend the winter in Terre Haute

in a private family where she could see the doctor often. To this the Bishop did not agree, as we learn from the following:

I do not see how it could be beneficial for Sister Aloyse to spend the winter with Mrs. Williams. What could she find there that she has not with you, if it be not the attentions of the people in the world? Moreover, no priest, no church, no Sisters,—what a privation this would be to her. Again, such a thing would be contrary to the spirit of your Community. Do not be afraid of your novices. If they do not accept your decisions graciously, the sooner they realize your firmness the better; . . . yet in all these matters we must pray and pray much, that the fault be not ours.

Sister Aloyse had not been named Superior of the Academy, as she expected, but she was employed there as a teacher. She then endeavored by every possible means to get control; this of course caused frequent misunderstandings and annoyance. She was patiently borne with for over a year, not for the assistance she rendered, for she rendered none, but because of the high esteem in which she was held by outside friends. The Annals say of her:

"She was one of those singular beings that are endowed with strange powers, and that figure in places where the enemy of souls employs agents to disturb the work of God. She could faint and have hemorrhages whenever it suited her purpose. At night she would hear strange sounds, and would awaken her companions, asking them if they heard the rappings at the door; her appearance at such times was so strange as to cause

every one to think the evil spirit had something to do with her.

"Father Perché, visiting St. Mary's at this time, and learning from Mother Theodore about her strange novice, asked to see her without her knowing that he requested it. The opportunity presented itself in taking him through the Academy. Being an ecclesiastic of profound spiritual knowledge and keen discernment in judging of souls, he addressed her a few words, and became convinced that she was possessed by the evil spirit. Though the weather was unpropitious and the roads bad, Mother Theodore made a journey to Vincennes to lay the case before the Bishop. God permitted that his eyes should be opened to the real state of this deluded novice. He visited St. Mary's for the purpose of examining her more closely, and it was by his direction that she was dismissed, he being present in the house at the time of her departure. She was not a subject fit for any convent, yet St. Mary's had much to suffer on account of her dismissal. She spread evil reports about the Sisters among the people, and at Terre Haute, where with Mrs. W—— she opened a school in opposition to St. Mary's, she succeeded in creating a very bad feeling toward the Sisters. This perceptibly injured the Academy. A few lines from Sister Eudoxie, mistress of novices at Ruillé-sur-Loir, now came to Mother Theodore, encouraging her in these troubles, and trying to reconcile her to remain the Superior of the Sisters of Providence in America.

Be assured, my dear Sister, your little souvenir gave me the greatest pleasure. I was uneasy about your health,

knowing it is always poor enough. With all my heart I beg of God not to take you from the dear mission of Vincennes. I do not see that you have as yet any pilot sufficiently capable of steering the little bark which Providence seems to bless in a very special manner. Dear Sister —— is very good; but for a long time I have not considered her capable of filling so difficult a position; she has not sufficient courage; she is, if I may say so, too devout, that is, too self-concentrated, having ideas of perfection not in keeping, it seems to me, with the zeal of a missionary. I sympathize deeply with you in the troubles you have experienced, both on the part of your eccentric chaplain and your intriguing novice. How much harm certain ambitious persons are capable of doing! It seems to me that you would do well not to receive those ramblers from other Communities; for, generally speaking, they are good only to create disorder. We have never had any satisfaction with persons of that sort; they are seldom converted. . . . In fine, it would be necessary to have, as you say, the spirit of Jesus—of wisdom, of understanding, of fortitude, of counsel, etc., to know what to do in all these trying circumstances.

The unfortunate Sister Aloyse is again mentioned in a letter of Mother Theodore to Bishop Bouvier, dated August 22, 1842.

My Lord and venerated Father:

Permit me to converse with you for some moments about your daughters of the Woods; their pains and their joys are yours, since you are so kind as to be always their father.

Some months ago a cloud hung over our solitude on account of the distressing news which reached us—the threatened loss of our dear father. We were told you

were going to leave Le Mans. I could not tell you of our regret. We looked upon the event as a real calamity for our Sisters in France as well as for ourselves; because if our house in Indiana exists, if it has already begun to prosper, it is indeed to you, next to God, that we owe it. You have been for us constantly the best of fathers and our protector; judge then whether the fear of losing you was not painful. It was a regret, too, for our good Bishop; therefore he hastened to inform us when he learned from the newspapers that your Lordship had declined the Archbishopric of Tours. We have all returned sincere thanks to Our Lord for this news, and will thank Him every day for having preserved this good father to us.

Bishop de la Hailandière continues to take interest in us. He is having an amount of work done to our Academy, too much indeed for his resources; he exhausts himself and imposes privations on himself for our benefit, and yet I am not satisfied. I should like to be able to pay our debts before doing things that are not absolutely necessary; and also on several other points I am not of his opinion, such as the reception of subjects, the admission to the habit, and even to the vows, and the acceptance of establishments. I am afraid of proceeding too fast, and the Bishop says that in this country nothing is done slowly. We fear somewhat for the future; one would require the talent of never opposing the will or desires of the Bishop, but of bringing him always, by presenting good reasons, to will of his own accord what we desire. I think, my Lord, that you understand my thought and that you will interpret it favorably; for the rest, I only tell you all this as a prelude to a favor I am going to ask you in the name of all your daughters at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, whether French or American. It is this, that you will never permit this poor little branch to be separated from its trunk; if you cut it off it will wither like a branch cut

from the stem that gave it life. I believe we are more attached to our beloved Ruillé, to our good Mother and Sisters, than when we were with them, and this sincere attachment is also deeply shared by all our Sisters in the New World. A good spirit is being established by degrees among our numbers, which are always increasing. The example of good Sister St. Francis Xavier is of great advantage in forming our young neophytes to piety, who, after acquiring the more necessary Christian virtues, end in practising all the virtues of the religious state. We have some who are truly admirable for courage and devotedness. How much good there is in this little seed that would develop of itself if it were well cultivated. It seems to me above all that there is great charity, true affection among our Sisters, and since we are no longer embarrassed by the novice of whom I wrote to you, I have neither seen nor heard anything that would show the least shadow of disunion. But that unhappy person indemnifies herself for no longer doing harm within the convent, by harming us without. She has taken as an associate a Catholic lady of good reputation; they have opened a school at Terre Haute in order to injure ours, and they have succeeded to a great extent; we shall have very few children next year. We trust to Providence that the trial will not last long. Another source of trouble was the coming of Mlle. Bernard without our having the least idea of her coming or her arrival in America. She was accompanied by the Bishop, who without obliging us to receive her into the novitiate, nevertheless wished it very much. I said I would not receive her, and the poor child was to return to Vincennes, when Sister Basilide and Sister St. Francis, overcome by her entreaties and prepossessing appearance, begged me to permit that Ruillé might be written to about her. I consented, and she awaits the answer here.

We have just had our retreat. It closed on the 15th instant. Four postulants received the habit and Sister Liguori pronounced her vows. These ceremonies are very touching here in the heart of the forest. The retreat was very edifying by the recollection of the Sisters; not a word was spoken even during recreation hours; one could not help feeling a holy emotion on beholding these good Americans so occupied with their own souls, with the desire of pleasing God, of making sacrifices to Him.

The petition Mother Theodore made in this letter, not to have her house separated from Ruillé, had been a debated question for a long time.

Before the departure of the Sisters for America, the Superiors consulted with the Bishops of Mans and Vincennes on the question of the new establishment's independence. Bishop de la Hailandière asked the important question:

To whom shall it belong? If you wish, my Lord, that the house shall depend solely on me I have no objection. I only expressed the contrary proposition in the fear that the Sisters would be discouraged by the fact of their not belonging to Ruillé any more. This thought has given to Miss Bernard, a person for whom I entertain a great esteem, an answer which will prevent her coming, viz., that if she came without her being received by Ruillé, I could not promise her that she would be admitted, since I should not be the Superior.

Again, a letter of Bishop de la Hailandière to Bishop Bouvier, dated October 22, 1841, has this to say on the subject:

My Lord:

I owe you many thanks for the continued good-will which you have the kindness to bear towards my diocese. I

present them to you with all my heart. I deeply regret that the House of Ruillé is unable to supply me with the two subjects we solicited. I had to come to some decision; therefore I wrote to the Superior General at least six months ago that I would not appeal to her again for subjects. God has preserved Mother Theodore to us. I am well satisfied with her. He is also pleased to send us many postulants; but how long it takes to form them, to make them *real* Sisters! The great trouble now would be if the Sisters, or even some of them, were recalled to Ruillé; for, supposing this, not only would those who remain be unable to continue the work, but it would be more difficult for me to call another Community to replace the one which had disappointed me. Besides, the heavy expense I have incurred, and which has financially embarrassed me, would be a loss which, considering our poverty, would be a direful misfortune. In France such might not be the case; but that is the way matters stand here.

The young woman referred to did not please Mother Mary, who counselled Mother Theodore not to receive her; and although the latter yielded to entreaty, as we have seen, Mother Mary had no sympathy for the foundress when she became involved in difficulties by the admission of Miss Bernard. She had not the shadow of a religious vocation, but the Bishop insisted on her being retained in the Community. Mother Theodore speaks again of the matter to her good friend Bishop Bouvier. Her letter of February 23, 1843, reveals what her heart was enduring from this and other matters:

Here, my Lord, it is true we have much to suffer in our deep forest, surrounded by enemies and having no other support than God alone. I, in particular, have sufferings which are personal, were it only that of having

charge, almost alone, of a congregation already numerous, to whom sometimes I have not bread to give. Often I know not where or how to procure necessaries for the morrow. Without counting the many contradictions that happen daily there is the fear of being burned down by our enemies. How often in beholding my dear Sisters leave the chapel after night prayers have I not said to myself: it is perhaps the last time we shall meet there together at the feet of Our Lord. How often this winter have I not started out of my sleep thinking that I heard the flames and saw their terrible light! I believe that our situation here is not well understood. Notwithstanding these anxieties I have generally preserved peace of heart and my wonted cheerfulness, and I always feel full of love and gratitude towards God, who has deigned, in spite of my sins, to grant me the grace of suffering something for Him; this favor appears to me greater than all the other gifts of Heaven. Occasionally, however, this habitual calm has been disturbed; from time to time my soul has had its tempests; sometimes I have felt so oppressed that I have thought I should be glad to die; but immediately thinking of my companions, I have been ashamed of my cowardice and have asked God's pardon. Forgive me, my Lord, for speaking so much of my tribulations. . . .

Permit me now to thank you for the relief you sent us; it was like a gift from Heaven, and it is a new proof of that tender watchfulness of divine Providence of whom we are doubly the children. We had but one dollar left of the money which Mr. Beyerly lent us, and we did not know where to get a penny for the wants of the house; but how could I distrust Providence? Now we have bread and clothing, thanks to your liberality. May we not in truth now call you our father?

Miss Bernard has been admitted into our house against my will formally and strongly expressed. She had been

judged by my Superiors; there was no need for me to examine her. I had said that I would not receive her, and I wrote to Bishop de la Hailandière that having said *no*, I would never say *yes*. Displeasure was the result. Our Sisters were consulted; they entreated me to give her a trial, and it was settled with them that she might enter the novitiate. Sister St. Francis Xavier took her particularly in charge. I yielded for the sake of peace, persuaded that this person, when better known, would never be received; in fact, it is easily seen that she was not made for the religious state, especially in America. However, I believe God has punished me for having acquiesced by the trouble I had in dismissing her. Even in sending her away we could not avoid displeasing our Bishop, who was still irritated because we dismissed another about two months ago, although it was with his sanction we did it. Those who remain seem to be animated by the best spirit. I believe you would be pleased could you see them.

We are asked to begin establishments in several towns in Indiana. Everything leads us to hope that our Community is called upon to do great good in this country but—that *miserable* money is wanting.

Sister St. Francis Xavier was heart and soul with her Mother, and she would not have deviated in the least from the Superior's wishes through fear of vitiating the perfect obedience she had vowed to God. She proposed, in order not to give offence to the Bishop, that Mlle. Bernard be received on trial. Her experience with the postulant is told in a letter she enclosed to Bishop Bouvier with Mother Theodore's. After thanking him for his kind assistance and expressing the universal delight at being affectionately remembered by him, she says:

I offered a communion in thanksgiving to Our Lord for the tender care He takes of us. I say *tender care*, since He chose your paternal hand to relieve us. Oh! sometimes it costs much to ask from strangers and receive what they give with disdain. But I have made the vow of poverty, and the poor should not be proud.

I suppose our Mother has spoken to you about Mlle. B——. I was so surprised at her persevering resolution that during the first days which she passed among us I looked upon her nearly as a model of courage, of abnegation, and humility. I was the first to desire that she might be received on trial in the novitiate, knowing that this would please his Lordship. Oh! I assure you I have done penance for it since. Never had I come in contact with such a head. She is able to cure one forever of delusions; she takes all her reveries for realities, and assures us that you told her things one would never have thought. She may probably do harm to our institution, although she politely said: "Have no uneasiness; I have seen all, but I will say nothing." I do not know what she has seen, but it seems to me that the greatest abuse that she could have remarked in our Community is that such a subject was suffered to remain in it for so long a time. How happy we are to be daughters of Providence! By it we are directed, and if it happen that we make a mistake while we believe we are doing right, it is that Providence which takes care to repair our errors and teaches us at the same time to distrust our own lights. The less we have of human aid, the more does it seem that God watches over us, and in this desert where He has placed us He Himself is our Moses, our manna, and our pillar of light.

I could not express to you the happiness my vocation gives me. It is not such as I had pictured it in my reveries in France; but far more pure, since it furnishes only

humility, abandonment, renunciation. I thank you, O my father, a thousand times for having sent me here. Never have I found myself in such favorable occasions for attaching myself solely to God. Monseigneur de la Hailandière is undecided in regard to my "perfections;" my ridiculous English puts me out of danger of vanity with my companions; Mother Theodore's frequent illnesses will not allow me to lean much on her; in fine, my fervor has vanished with a large portion of my interior consolations.

If some day you could come among us you would see how truly your work is the work of God. Our American Sisters, born so proud and so independent, submit with zeal to the least observance of our holy Rule. Among them are some endowed with great courage and who serve God because it is right and reasonable to do so, not because it is sweet to love Him. All have great love for their Superiors in France, and would be very happy to know them. Sister M. Magdalen, one of the most fervent and devoted of the postulants, is busy making you a map of the United States; she works at it in a deep spirit of faith. The other day she said to me, "I want to do it with great care, because in working for the Bishop of Mans it seems like working for Our Lord Himself." I am collecting for you accounts of various events relating to our mission. If I can have them ready before your letters are sent I shall enclose them; if not, they will be ready for the next. We are always so pleased to receive news from Ruillé that we thought you would also be pleased to hear something of our Indiana, which is your children's battlefield and sometimes a field of victory. Whatever may be the issue of the combat, we shall have glorified God if we allow ourselves to be guided by His providence, and we shall bless Him for having inspired you to send us into this forest, which will assure us of the possession of our heavenly home, if we are faithful to the end.

## CHAPTER XIX.

FIRE DESTROYS THE GRANARY.—MOTHER THEODORE IS REFUSED CREDIT AT THE STORES.—THE SISTERS IN WANT OF FOOD.—ASSISTANCE FROM FRANCE.—MOTHER THEODORE PROPOSES A VOYAGE TO FRANCE.—BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE'S LETTERS OF APPROVAL.—FATHER CORBE APPOINTED CHAPLAIN AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.

Returning to the early trials through which the Community was passing, the next to be noted is one that occurred as a birthday gift to Mother Theodore.

October 2d was a beautiful mild day. A plentiful harvest had been gathered into the granary and the farming implements were all stored away for the winter. About noon the large new barn was discovered to be on fire, and everything being very dry, as it had not rained for some weeks, the flames spread rapidly from one part to another, defying the best efforts of all on the place. Mother Theodore fought the fiery element with characteristic determination, but seeing that nothing could be saved, she calmly desisted, repeating *The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.*

It was thought by some that the destruction of the granary was the work of incendiaries excited by the sensational stories circulated in and around Terre Haute

by the expelled novice previously mentioned; by others that the fire was accidental, originating in the carelessness of a workman who was smoking near the barn. Whatever the cause, the loss was estimated at four thousand dollars, exclusive of the cost of the buildings. This was no inconsiderable amount, and it left the Community in destitution.

It was extremely unfortunate that this accident happened at a time when the disaffection of the townspeople was at its height on account of the dismissal of Sister Aloyse, who had by this time won great popularity in the city. On one occasion when Mother Theodore as usual sent an order to the store where she had an open account, the proprietor returned it with a brief note saying he could no longer give her credit, and that he wished to close accounts with the Sisters. As she was not trusted elsewhere the Community was reduced to extremities.

The unfortunate tidings of this loss by fire drew forth much sympathy from friends in France. Mother Mary wrote:

RUILLÉ, November 28, 1842.

The disaster of which you give us the details in your letter of October 3d afflicted us very much; but we would more easily console ourselves for a temporal loss if anything besides malevolence had occasioned it, as we think. Now we can have no assurance of what your future will be, since according to appearances you have enemies who wish to make you carry off your tent, not with weapons in hand but by fire and hunger. This is a hard trial, my dear daughter, which God in His goodness sends to you. He treats you as He did His friend Job; have the fidelity of this holy patriarch. And in your regard may the Lord

say in irony to the demons of vengeance: "Have you seen the daughters of My providence in America, suffering hunger, cold, and all kinds of privations for the glory of My name and the salvation of souls?" Follow up my thought, dear daughter Theodore, and be penetrated with the sentiments my soul experiences in writing these words to you. Renew your courage, and if you must carry the wood and sword for your sacrifice, bow your head and bend your shoulders in imitation of the old and of the new Isaac.

Our venerable prelate, whose heart is so sensitive, and in whom your adversity excites great compassion, has charged himself with forwarding to you a thousand francs, through the Ladies of the Sacred Heart who reside at Saint-Louis. It is little, my dear daughter, and we would wish to do more for you, but our own expenses have been so great this year we could not avoid running into debt for the erection of another wing to our house; notwithstanding this we will endeavor to aid you as much as possible. I will not say anything about the missive of Mlle. Bernard; you know that you received her against my formal advice, and, I believe, against that of our venerable prelate, who knew her better than I did, as she had been a boarder in one of the Communities in his diocese, where they were not too well pleased with her. If the proceedings of your ex-Sister Aloyse make you carry a heavy cross, well, Mlle. B—— will likewise be a subject of great tribulation to you, and a very short time will suffice to prove it. Give us news as often as possible; you cannot imagine how uneasy we are about you all.

Bishop Bouvier adds on the same sheet:

Your letter of August 22d gave me consoling details of your house. I was quite delighted at what related to the good spirit of the Sisters, to the success, so very consoling,

of your retreat, and to your hopes and prospects. But your letter of October 3d to your Superior General has grieved me to the quick. God must have designs over you since He tries you in this manner. We continue to look upon you as our very dear daughters, and what you suffer touches us as though we suffered it ourselves.

If the Bishop of Vincennes or some other good souls do not come to your assistance, how will you be able to repair your loss by fire? It is now time to cast yourselves into the arms of Providence, calling to mind the words of Our Lord, who has said: *The birds of the air sow not, neither do they gather into barns; yet not one of these falls to the ground without the permission of your heavenly Father; are you not worth much more than they?*

This heavenly Father, whose daughters you are, sends you a thousand francs; it is very little, but let us hope that He will send you more from other quarters.

A month later the Bishop wrote:

M. de la Bertaudière, founder of your establishment at Soulaines, having learned of your misfortune, hastens to send you three thousand francs. Your Superior General forwarded the amount to me that I might transmit it to you if I could do so. I have again addressed myself to the Ladies of the Sacred Heart at Paris, who will kindly send this sum to you, with the amount already announced, through their establishment at Saint-Louis. I congratulate myself, good Sister, in being at least the instrument used by divine Providence to convey to you this little assistance that God sends.

Had these generous donations reached the Sisters promptly circumstances would have been different; but up to the spring of the ensuing year scarcely anything had been received. Added to these hardships was an oc-

currence of a painful nature, inasmuch as it was calculated to destroy the confidence hitherto reposed in the foundress at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods by her Mother Superior in France.

Some one, pretending to be a great friend of the Community, wrote from Cincinnati to the Superiors in France that the Indiana mission was in great distress and the Sisters were suffering very much from the excess of authority exercised by their Mother. The person making this unsigned report claimed to be actuated by motives of disinterestedness and charity, and, it would seem, was not entirely discredited at Ruillé-sur-Loir, at least as to motives. Though not wishing to recognize an anonymous communication, Mother Mary became exceedingly anxious owing to these reports, the more so because she had had recent letters from St. Mary's in which nothing but a spirit of courage and cheerfulness was apparent. Perplexed and fearful, she addressed a letter to Mother Theodore, reproaching her for hiding from her what she had a right to know, and ordering that every Sister should write her at once, giving an exact account of all that concerned her individually and whatever she might wish to say regarding their affairs. The greatest freedom was enjoined. This letter occasioned no little surprise. The Sisters had gone through much anxiety and suffering, it is true, but that they were unhappy under their Mother Superior was not true, and with eager hearts they hastened to assure the Superiors of Ruillé that false information had been given. The author of the anonymous letter, it was afterwards learned, had hoped to be reinstated at St. Mary's if a new Superior were appointed. The same

person was responsible, in no small degree, for much of Bishop de la Hailandière's displeasure with the sorely tried foundress; but it was discovered at too late a period to prevent the crisis which it would seem had to come. This, and other matters equally distressing, of which satisfactory explanations could not be made by letter, joined to the loss the Community had sustained by fire, induced Mother Theodore to propose a journey to France. The Sisters approved the project, notwithstanding their fears for her safety and the thought that they would be deprived of her presence for several months; whereupon, Mother Theodore submitted her resolution to the Bishop, who replied in the following terms:

I have weighed before God your reasons for undertaking a journey to France. I approve of this measure and hope that God may grant you success and vouchsafe to bring you back to your daughters rich in the alms that will have been bestowed upon you. Go, therefore, my dear Sister, to that France which is so charitable, so zealous for poor missionaries, and whose resources seem to increase in proportion as it gives. Make the faithful understand well your position and your wants; tell them that, notwithstanding what I have done to establish you, you are far from being securely founded; that my resources are exhausted and that you have heavy debts. Speak of your log house, your accidents, your farmhouse, and your loss by fire; of the distress of the country, of the children whom you are obliged to teach *gratis;* all this is the truth, and you cannot fail to excite a lively interest in your favor.

I authorize you to make use of this letter as you please. I beg of those among my venerable colleagues who will read it, to be favorable to you and to aid you with their

alms and their prayers. I bless you with all my heart, and remain, with deep respect and affection,

Your very humble servant,

✝ CELESTINE, Bp. of Vincennes.

VINCENNES, IND., U. S. A., April 30, 1843.

At the same time the Bishop sent the following lines to Bishop Bouvier of Le Mans:

Behold our dear Sister Theodore again at your feet. It is with my full consent that she has left for a time the work in which God has engaged her here, in order to try to elicit in France the charity of the faithful in behalf of her institution. Of myself I should not have advised her to make the voyage, although it is evident that the numerous sacrifices I have made for the Sisters cannot be continued any longer; to my great regret it becomes impossible for me to provide for their institution as should be done. But seeing in this good Sister so much devotedness and such a strong desire, despite her ill-health, to go and entreat help among her friends, I could not but applaud her zeal and allow her to go under the guidance of divine Providence. I beg of you, my Lord, to receive her favorably and assist her in interesting the charitable persons of your rich diocese in behalf of her Congregation, already so numerous, but so poor. France sends here her missionaries and her religious women; she shares with us the merit of her prayers; she also gives some alms. As for myself, I have for my immense diocese no other resources than what come through her Society for the Propagation of the Faith; unfortunately the resources diminish as our needs increase. If a more abundant share be not granted us this year, we shall not be able to do anything more.

Sister Theodore will endeavor to explain. I beg that she be given credit.

Accompanying these expressions of approval were many details of counsel and recommendations to various friends, chiefly among the clergy, notably the Archbishop of Paris, with whom Bishop de la Hailandière had been consecrated, the Bishop of Versailles, one of his consecrators, the Bishop of Rennes, the Bishop of Nancy; also the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in Paris, in whose chapel he had been consecrated. All this he provides for Mother Theodore, and finally adds:

Auspice Mariae.

The object of this voyage must be to interest the faithful in your establishment.

1st. They can aid you by their prayers; ask many, especially from those who pray well, who seem to have power with God.

2d. They may procure novices for you; a few good ones would be very desirable, (*a*) those that have talents, especially for music, which is needed so much; (*b*) those that have fortunes, by which means the house will be maintained. Of course, it is well understood, whatever might be their talents or their fortunes, *that* would not suffice; there must be a true religious vocation; the love of suffering, not in speculation but in practice, and true humility are necessary; for it must be borne in mind that we are founding a religious house, and that there ought to be found in its members the sanctity of founders of Communities. Great care should be used in making inquiries about the persons whom you will think of admitting.

3d. They can give you money; they will do so if you explain your needs sufficiently, stating that your establishment is not self-sustaining, that you have contracted heavy debts, that you have refused postulants who were unable to pay their expenses because you were not able to support

them; how could you support and educate them without funds at your command? Moreover, you must purchase more land in order to raise enough for your sustenance. The Bishop is no longer able to continue his assistance; had he anything to invest it should be in a seminary the first stone of which is not yet laid, nor has he even the ground on which to build. Must you abandon a work now which Almighty God seems to bless in so special a manner? I think there is not an institution in the United States which has developed so rapidly as St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Without education Catholicity cannot be spread to any extent; even the faith cannot be preserved without it. The great majority of Catholics cannot pay for their education, and if they could, they would not find teachers to make known to them the truth. What we need for them is to open free schools; but for this we must have money. Solicit, therefore, freely and earnestly; it must appeal to the charity of the devout, who need but to be convinced.

The diocese had received large alms from the societies of Paris and Tours established for the foreign missions, but these were entirely insufficient to meet all the demands. Churches had to be built and furnished in many places; a seminary was badly needed; there were no orphanages yet; the school in Vincennes had to be maintained; the Brothers under Father Sorin also needed help, and some of the priests in the diocese could not support themselves, so destitute were the flocks they attended;—all these were heavy draughts upon the poor Bishop, and it was a sore disappointment to him when his allowance was greatly reduced, because of certain representations made to the associations by some disaffected persons in the diocese stating that

their funds were not judiciously applied at Vincennes. Mother Theodore was requested to try to remove this impression.

If there had been much cause for uneasiness in the past to the Sisters at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, there was one dispensation at this time that emphasized very forcibly the Royal Psalmist's words: *The Lord is sweet and righteous; His ways are mercy and truth.* That very tender providence and sweet mercy was the appointment of Rev. J. Corbe to the chaplaincy of St. Mary's. Father Corbe was the Superior of the Ecclesiastical Seminary at Vincennes and rector of the cathedral at the time God gave him to St. Mary's. This choice was urged upon the Bishop by the Rev. M. de St. Palais, who arrived from Chicago, where he had been in charge until the new diocese was created. He was deeply interested in the Sisters at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, and knew that they stood in need of a capable adviser. The Bishop consented after much hesitancy, and the Sisters of Providence fully appreciated the sacrifice the Bishop made in allowing Father Corbe to leave the cathedral and the seminary.

Father Corbe wrote to Mother Theodore after receiving his appointment:

You say you await me with impatience. Oh! why am I not already there, if it be the will of God? for the state of uncertainty in which I have been for so long a time is very painful. Yes, truly, it will be God's direct will if I go, not that I do not desire the success of your work, which is that of religion; not that I do not wish to use my utmost endeavors to contribute to its success; but to go there and undertake to remove the obstacles to your welfare, and to teach others, privileged souls, to walk in the perfection

of the love of God—it appears to me a task beyond my power. However, may the most holy will of God be done! And if He chooses me to be the instrument of His graces to you, pray, oh! pray with all your heart that I may become worthy of His choice.

J. CORBE.

Father Corbe arrived at St. Mary's on July 28, 1842, and remained until his death, which occurred June 3, 1872.

## CHAPTER XX.

MOTHER THEODORE RETURNS TO FRANCE.—EFFORTS OF FRIENDS IN FRANCE TO MAKE HER MISSION A SUCCESS.—TROUBLES AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS CAUSE HER TO RETURN TO AMERICA.

On April 26, 1843, Mother Theodore, accompanied by Sister Mary Cecilia, a novice, left St.-Mary-of-the-Woods and proceeded without delay to New York, where they were to embark on the *Silvia*, an American ship. Madame Parmentier, their ever-devoted and valued friend, had collected sixty dollars for them, which contributed to defraying their expenses, and some smaller donations were received from other good friends at Philadelphia and New York. Thus they could say again, "Providence of God, resource in all our necessities!"

The bereaved family at St. Mary's lamented their Mother's absence, and her maternal heart was not insensible to the affection of those dear daughters whom she was obliged to leave for a time. Her tears mingled with theirs, but as usual she assumed the office of consoler and encourager, gently, yet forcibly, presenting the supernatural side of the case and leading them to that perfect disengagement which is essential to a truly religious life. In answer to a letter in which one of the Sisters expressed her apprehensions that Mother Theodore might not survive the voyage, she says, writing from

BROOKLYN, May, 1843.

Only in fear and trembling I write you these few lines. I fear you will weep again. O my dear daughter, do not do so; those tears cannot be pleasing to God. He is jealous of the heart, especially of that of a Religious. Perhaps it is to detach you that God permits me to leave St. Mary's. Let us adore the designs of this good Master and be resigned to His holy will. . . . I will not tell you to pray for me, you do that; but I say, be good in order to obtain for me the graces I need. If you are not all good, I shall die on the way. My lot is in your hands; for it is written that God does the will of those who love Him.

Had Mother Theodore consulted her own feelings she would never have left St. Mary's; nothing but the dire necessities of her suffering Community could have inspired her resolution and filled her with the courage she manifested. She would now rather perish in the attempt than see her work fail; and as long as there was a means untried to sustain it, she could not satisfy her conscience unless she had fulfilled her obligation. Of their actual condition Sister Olympiade related: "After Mother Theodore's departure we were very poor. Sister St. Francis consoled us in all our privations. Often after a frugal breakfast we had nothing left for dinner, and I used to try to borrow something, such as eggs, corn-meal, or potatoes. The people to whom I applied were almost as poor as we, and the fear of not being paid back made them refuse very often. One day a widow, Priscilla Thralls, who had been employed as laundress for the Community, had pity on our distress. In her garden there were but six hills of potatoes; she gave me four, reserving only two for her family." The Sisters

of St. Mary's have remembered this act of generosity and testified their gratitude not only to the Mother but to the children who have found their means of livelihood in the employment afforded them at St. Mary's. A short time after the good widow's act of charity the reimbursement of a small sum of money supposed to be lost, probably that which they had deposited in the Illinois bank, and which failed, permitted them to procure flour for the boarders. Knowing that Sister St. Francis' health was not strong enough for corn bread they gave her some of the children's wheat bread. Not aware of this attention, she thought she was partaking of the common fare, for she would never have consented to be an exception; obedience only could have made her accept it. From time to time she would ask how much flour they had. When the econome replied that there was still a little in the sack she did not appear surprised, for she had so much confidence in God's help that even a miracle would not have surprised her.

In May of the same year [1843] the Bishop of Vincennes made a journey east to assist at the fiifth Council of Baltimore from which city he addressed the following lines to Mother Theodore, who, he supposed, had by that time completed her voyage:

BALTIMORE, May 23, 1843.

You have arrived without too much fatigue, I trust, on this serenely beautiful day which is like a reflection of heaven. May your soul be as calm and as free from all anxieties! God is with you; what more could you wish? His angels accompany you. Oh, may they bring you back very soon! During your absence many hearts will be made sorrowful, your daughters love you so much. With them I

pray with all my heart for you. I have remained here some days since the Council adjourned, almost solely in the hope of prevailing upon some of the Bishops to go to Vincennes. We shall be there for Corpus Christi, and I expect we shall have three or four Bishops in the procession—those from New Orleans, Saint-Louis, and Texas. You will be missing, but you will assist elsewhere at this most holy feast, so popular, so solemn in France; and the God whom you will adore is also the God to whom we will offer our homage, whom we shall beg to bless us in America, in France, and throughout the Catholic world; all will do the same.

In my last letter I told you some of our proceedings at the Council, and, moreover, the satisfaction of procuring six new bishoprics, and, consequently, six new Bishops, and two coadjutors, making in all for this country twenty-three sees and twenty-seven Bishops. . . . I am anxious to receive the first news about you, to learn that your passage was not too painful and that you arrived happily in port. Write me a long letter, and with my regards to Sister Mary Cecilia, tell her I await also a letter from her. May God bless you both.

All yours,

✠ CELESTINE, Bp. of Vinc.

The voyage proved very prosperous, and nothing of consequence happened. Within a month Mother Theodore found herself surrounded by her dear Sisters at Ruillé, who were as happy to see her again as she was to be with them. There were many things to be discussed, many things to be settled. The experience of the last three years had made a very large volume in her heart; what a consolation, now that she could read some of its pages to those who could understand and sympathize and give her the counsel she longed for in

her peculiarly painful situation. Ruillé headed the list of charities for the Indiana mission with a donation of one thousand francs; this was a generous sum at the time, for the Community was in need.

Mother Theodore's soliciting included many of the chief towns and cities in France; but the results were most discouraging. Those whose means enabled them to contribute largely to benevolent works had gone to summer resorts or country residences, so that a long period of waiting was in store for the travellers; yet various letters show the interest that was awakened in some circles and the efforts of the Community's friends to make the appeal a financial success. The first is addressed to Mother Theodore from Tours by Mlle. Henriette de la Valette, a cousin of Sister St. Francis Xavier. She writes:

November 4, 1843.

Abbé Morisseau went to ask the Rt. Rev. Bishop on what day he would have the collection taken up which he promised you, in order to notify you in time to be present. His Lordship replied that it would be next Sunday, but that he could spare you the trouble of coming, for he would make it his own affair. The Bishop seems to be very much interested in you. He will send the amount by the Bishop of Mans, who will be here that day.

M. Aubineau, whom you met here and who listened to your recital with so much interest, had the thought at once of putting an article in the *Univers* (at that time M. Aubineau was not associated with M. Veuillot) and making known all the touching things you related in order to excite that interest in your institution which it so much deserves. He has an exceedingly interesting sketch—only an epitome, however—of the delightful rehearsal you gave

us that evening. The Bishop thinks the lecturer will use it largely in his discourse for your benefit.

In regard to your collection at Paris, M. Aubineau, who knows how those things are conducted, urges us strongly to tell you that, if you wish to succeed, you must positively go to Paris some weeks before, to obtain from the Archbishop, or from Mgr. de Janson, a recommendation in order to be introduced to those ladies who usually make these collections, and who succeed so well, not only in the churches but even more so in the circles where they solicit; but for this they insist on being notified in advance. If you cannot remain in Paris, it would be advisable to prepare everything well and then leave the collection to the ladies, who have the greatest reputation for success—Madame Duchatal, wife of the Minister, and Madame Visconti—the one because of her position, the other for her great tact in these matters. M. Aubineau also mentions Madame de Chateaubriand; and if the Queen continues to favor you, she will appoint one of her ladies to assist, which she frequently does; such are the means to succeed. But, I repeat it, my dear Mother, you must have the time and the courage to organize all that beforehand, otherwise you will do very little. If, as we hope, you return to Tours, we can speak more about this; we shall be happy to see you again and to offer you hospitality.

The time designated by the good Bishop of Tours for the appeal in behalf of the "Poor Sisters in the Woods" was the day which closed the retreat for the clergy of the diocese held at the cathedral, a most propitious time it would seem. On the eighth of the same month Madame de la Valette wrote to Mother Theodore:

Providence watching over its own has conducted all and disposed for a favorable issue. My daughter has given

you information of the interview with the Bishop, and her gracious reception. He assured her that he charged himself with doing everything calculated to make your affairs a success. God will do the rest. The Bishop of Mans will officiate in the morning and the Bishop of Angers in the evening. There is no doubt of there being a large attendance, especially as there will be nothing extraordinary in the other parishes; so, very dear Mother, I have every reason to hope for your splendid undertaking, which in our little circle we look upon as our own. . . . The good and pious young man seized upon the details you gave him with the greatest delight. M. Veuillot, the intimate friend of M. Aubineau, director, editor, and proprietor of the *Univers*, enchanted with the notice furnished by his friend, has just had printed five hundred copies, which will be distributed to the congregation. The same appeared in the *Univers*, which has an extensive circulation. You will appreciate this action on the part of M. Veuillot, as he is poor on account of having sacrificed a fine position and all the advantages the government would have conferred upon him in consideration of his talents, that he might have the happiness of being of service to religion. You will have more ample details of this Christian man, worthy of the ages of faith, when we shall have the honor of seeing you again.

A few days later there is another letter from this estimable lady:

I should like to be able to answer your letter point by point in a satisfactory way; but I have nothing to tell you about the generosity of our indifferent yet opulent city. The Bishop spared no effort, neither announcements nor invitations to read the pamphlet; nothing was forgotten by Father Lartique, S.J., in the pulpit; he went at his sub-

ject with all his heart. The Bishop had the collection made by a canon and a director of the Seminary; but from what I can learn it was one of the poorest collections ever taken up.

To this M. Aubineau adds on the same sheet:

You will find at the Visitation in Paris a package of books which M. Mame confided to me, and which will increase somewhat our pitiful and shameful collection.

Madame Le Fer de la Motte, the mother of Sister St. Francis Xavier, wished also to contribute to the welfare of her spiritual daughters in Indiana. She had adopted them all in giving them her Irma. Mother Theodore recognizes this dear lady's kind intentions in the letter that follows.

RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR [SARTHE], Sept. 16, 1843.

MADAME AND VERY DEAR FRIEND:

I should have written to you long ago to tell you again how happy I was to become acquainted with you, to see you, to speak with you. My stay was short, it is true, but the remembrance of it will be lasting. I should wish to express this to each member of your estimable family, especially to the worthy Monsieur Le Fer, and to our dear little future Sisters, Eugénie and Cécile; but this is a sacrifice which we shall all unite in offering to the Almighty. He will accept it and put it to our account. He loves us so much. I have recommended your Abbé to the Curé of Ruillé, also to him of St. Mary's. I have received news of my children in the forest; all write to me, except the one from whom I expected a long letter. Sister St. Francis did not put in a single word for me, but was careful to enclose messages for every one else; tell me, could we not chastise her for her mortification? I can find no other reason to excuse her silence than that. Our dear child is

well, they tell me; she has had the sick-headache but rarely since my departure. As to what you wish to send to your dear daughter, I leave you entirely free in your choice. The time of my departure is not yet fixed. I hope it will be before the winter is too far advanced. . . .

I have not spoken of Mlle. Lavienville; it was because I flattered myself that I would have the pleasure of seeing her in Paris. Please tell her that I love her always and that I recommend myself and my little family to her prayers. The same petition I make to all who, like herself, take interest in the good of souls. . . .

It is impossible to answer all the amiable things you say to me, except by a profound sentiment of gratitude; I can only express it to God, who understands well the language of the heart. I thank Him over and over for the unexpected favor He granted me in the midst of your family. Let us all beg of Him the grace to draw from it the fruit which He intended in giving it.

My dear madame, far from diminishing my esteem and affection by what you have confided to me, you have, on the contrary, increased both the one and the other. Mutual confidence is the sweet secret of gaining hearts. No, I was not disedified at the manner in which you received our little humiliation. I could even shed tears over it myself; humiliation is the food of strong souls. It is not surprising that we who are weak should suffer from it.

I thank Mlle. Eugénie for her letter and for the suggestions she gives me to address myself to the *Ministre de la Marine*. Bishop Bouvier will make the request for us. You will be pleased to know that Mother Mary has been retained in her office as Superior General.

Should I not have remorse of conscience for writing so long a letter?

The special favor Our Lord granted her while at Saint-

Servan with the family of M. and Mme. Le Fer was a humiliation the nature of which we cannot ascertain; yet, that it was something peculiarly embarrassing may be judged from Mother Theodore's avowal, and the consolation she offers to Madame Le Fer, who seems to have shared in it. Humiliations are the food of the strong, she tells us, and she confesses that she is not one of the strong, since she herself could shed some tears over the occurrence. But in telling us also that she thanked God over and over for this special favor does she prove herself to be one of the weak souls?

This letter brought another from Madame Le Fer, which she sent in care of the Visitation Nuns in Paris, from whom Mother Theodore received hospitality while she was in the metropolis:

I am almost tempted to give you advice, which is to leave those ungrateful Americans who are willing to make so few sacrifices in behalf of their daughters—postulants—and come back to France, bringing me my Irma. You will no doubt take a more perfect course both for you and for us; you will return to your forest and there in the midst of inconceivable trials you will endeavor to weather the storm; or, rather, you will oppose courage and resignation which, God willing, eventually will triumph over every obstacle. . . . Dearly loved Sister, do not allow your zeal to carry you too far; no one is required to do impossibilities. Consult your Superiors; beware of the zeal, rather too ardent, of your good Bishop. Permit me to ask the result of your collection; what are your hopes, your resources, if indeed you have any. You can imagine in what anxiety we are about all these things. I have not been able yet to procure the letter of introduction

from M. Chateaubriand, his nephew not having returned from Jersey.

Try to find out where Sister Rosalie [1] lives, who has "bread on credit," so it is said. My son returned from his ordination to the priesthood yesterday, and this morning I assisted at the Mass of my dear Alphonse. You may imagine the emotion of all who assisted; but what was most extraordinary for me, I could not shed one tear. Impossible. I was sick from it. Pray for Alphonse, dear Sister. I thank you for having recommended him to those Religious, so as to obtain from God all the graces of which he stands in need to make him a worthy minister of God.

Like yourself, I should be tempted to punish that dear Irma, who seems to imagine that you have not mortifications enough to offer to God and wants to augment them. I am also tempted to murmur against the remorse of conscience of a certain good Religious who, after having performed the good work of writing a nice long letter to a poor sorrowful mother, had scruple about it. I am sure she had no scruple about the last, it was short enough. This is not intended as a reproach to you, for your time is always taken up; but could not Sister M. Cecilia serve as your amanuensis when your occupations do not permit you to write in detail to us? . . . I would like to ask whether your institution is subordinate to Ruillé or not. I am pleased to know that Mother Mary is re-elected; she is much more interested in me than you are. [This refers to the frequent letters Sister St. Francis was permitted to

[1] Sister Rosalie, whose death occurred February 9, 1856, was a member of the Sisters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de Paul. She was identified with the great works of charity accomplished by the Sisters of Charity in France in the first half of the nineteenth century. A charming, brief sketch of her life is given by Aubineau in "Les Serviteurs de Dieu Au XIX^me Siècle."

write while a novice at Ruillé, which favor she did not seem to enjoy at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.] I ought, therefore, to love her more; however, I cannot do so; there are singular things like that.

It would seem from these letters that Mother Theodore intended returning to America when she perceived how unsuccessful her errand so far had been. Friends tried to prevail on her to prolong her stay in France, among them M. Aubineau, who wrote:

We regret very much your intended departure to America, partly on our own account because it deprives us of edifying conversations upon which we had calculated, and partly because we feel confident that if your sojourn in France were prolonged by two months you would collect more than you expect. But it seems God ordains otherwise, that He alone will have charge of your affairs. I cannot say whether the *Univers* has received any gifts for you or not, but you would do well to see about it while you are in Paris.

Madame de la Valette informed me that she had recommended to your prayers a conversion that I have much at heart. I trust you have not forgotten it, and I dare flatter myself that even when you return to your loved convent at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods you will not forget my earnest recommendations, and that you and your fervent daughters will vouchsafe to call down the mercy of God on him who esteems himself so happy to be your secretary, and who remains, Madame,

Your humble and most devoted servant in J. C.,

LEON AUBINEAU.

He wrote to Mother Theodore again, as follows:

You will allow me to inform you that the navy officer whose conversion I recommended to your prayers is now

an excellent Christian, whose piety edifies me and makes me think how serious and difficult an affair is that of our salvation. I hope he will do a great deal of good; his position enables him to do much for God's interests. I do not doubt but that you will have a large share in his works, towards which your prayers will have contributed; and since I have the proof under my eyes of the power of the prayers of religious missionaries, I beg of you, my reverend Mother, not to forget to ask of God my entire conversion; and I promise that if the Lord Jesus grants me this grace—to love His service generously—I shall not forget St.-Mary-of-the-Woods and all its pious and zealous inmates.

While at Paris Mother Theodore wrote a few lines to Bishop Bouvier regarding the question of her return to America:

Were it left to me [she said] I believe I should start with the little that we have, on account of the difficulties that have arisen since my departure between our good Bishop and the Sisters. I say this, my Lord, simply as an opinion in case you might wish to know it; but I assure you I am not anxious to follow it, being, on the contrary, perfectly submissive to what your Lordship shall please to advise. If, my Lord, you should accept the proposal to have us leave before the winter sets in, it would be necessary to write at once to the Ministry at Paris to know whether we may have our passage free, and at which seaport of France we should have to embark to go to New Orleans. This is very important to us, as we are four to take passage and we should have to give a sum of seven hundred and fifty francs apiece, which would not be possible for us to do. . . . I have debts at Paris which I do not know how to discharge; however, I am not too much distressed. I see in all this the fulfillment of the will of God, and I submit to it.

It was always thus with the venerated Mother. Charged with the temporalities connected with her work, she was mindful of all the details; but when she had done what her prudence suggested, she ever saw in the issue, and adored, the holy will of God.

In his reply Bishop Bouvier says:

A more inauspicious time for soliciting aid in the cities could not have been chosen, for all persons of note are in the country, and most of them do not return until December. As to remaining in France until they return, I dare not advise it. I fear a prolonged absence from your institution in America might bring to it more prejudice than the advantage you might procure it by gathering up a little more help. You seem to understand it as I do. Besides, M. Choiselet writes me that in the *exposé* made by the Bishop of Vincennes regarding the needs of his diocese, to serve as a basis for shares in the funds of 1843, the establishment of the Sisters of Providence is comprised; he adds that the Council took this article into consideration in the large allowance that it made over to the Bishop of Vincennes. This fact he has written to you, so that, if necessary, you may show his letter to Bishop de la Hailandière; finally, he has advanced you the sum of five thousand francs on this grant; you are hence in a position to pay your debts in Paris and to make necessary purchases. This being the case, my advice is that you prepare to leave before the bad season sets in.

## CHAPTER XXI.

MOTHER THEODORE IS DEPOSED IN HER ABSENCE.—HISTORICAL NOTES.—BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE'S EARLY DIFFICULTIES.

We come now to an order of events which we shall introduce by a letter from the Bishop of Vincennes. It was dated

Saint-Vincent's, Shelby Co., Ind., Aug. 23, 1843.

To Mother Theodore:

I have received three of your letters though I have written but twice. My reasons for not writing are too numerous to be stated; of one only shall I speak—the events that have taken place at St. Mary's since my return from the East, and which bear heavily upon my mind and heart, coming, as they do, from those to whom I had shown so much friendliness; still I was not willing to write you a word on the subject, as explanations by letter can scarcely be satisfactory, and I determined to wait for a *viva voce* explanation when you shall have come back if Almighty God permits you to return to your dear Sisters in our poor Indiana. Had I not learned that they wrote to you from St. Mary's probably more than they should have done, I would not make any allusion to the subject. I preached the retreat to the Sisters; they were very earnest and devout, and as far as my experience goes, that retreat has been useful. I received the vows of Sister Mary and Sister Agnes. Sister Mary Joseph was absent.

Since your time as Superior of our infant house had expired, we had, on the feast-day of our blessed Mother, an election, the first which has taken place in the Community. You have been elected for three years, and until your return, which is expected towards the close of the year, I have myself appointed Sister Basilide to replace you.

The last paragraph was a shock at Ruillé. The Bishop of Mans could not understand it; for, notwithstanding the acknowledged right of a Bishop over matters pertaining to a Community whose Rules have not received the Papal confirmation, the Bishop of Vincennes seemed to forget the conditions on which this Community had been given to him, as well as the statement one of his own letters contained—that he had no intention of founding a Community of his own and wished the Rule followed at Ruillé to be observed at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. It was true the Rule prescribed the election of a Superior General, but it was not possible under the existing conditions to observe all the Constitutions. The article specifying an election stated also that there be at least twenty electors, including the members of the Council. As yet no Council had been chosen; there were not yet twenty members in the Community, even including the novices. Until such time, then, as the Congregation's membership should admit of everything in due form, a dispensation had been granted by the Bishop of Mans, when Mother Theodore was appointed "Foundress and Superior General for life, or as long as the interests of the new Community require." It seemed to the Bishop of Vincennes that the interests of the Community required a change of authority; yet it was supposed that he would at least

have notified the Superiors at Ruillé and come to an understanding with the Bishop of Mans before proceeding to such a measure. There had not been any suspicion of the Bishop's intention; on the contrary, it is easily recalled how persistently he refused Mother Theodore's proffered resignation on several occasions.

However, there was a previous communication that might have suggested the Bishop's preferences had their eyes not been held. It was in answer to a letter written by Sister St. Francis to Bishop de la Hailandière in which she referred to some harsh treatment Mother Theodore received, endeavoring to explain matters to exonerate her misunderstood Mother Superior. There had been frequent exchanges of letters between herself and the Bishop, originating at the time she offered herself for his diocese; hence her freedom in addressing him. The Bishop wrote to her:

Your letters always give me pleasure, although I do not always answer them. The more frank they are the better I like them. The first, those you wrote from Saint-Servan, were such; they were full of confidence, a little less poetic, and I found nothing to blame in them, but much to praise. The poor missionary was flattered—I should rather say proud—for he thought that by you Almighty God would do much good in His diocese. Why must it be that since your arrival in America you are not found to be the same? There is an enigma here which I cannot solve. One thing, however, which is very clear to me is, that it is impossible for much good to be done, as I understand it, without a change.

Explanations only multiplied difficulties. Nothing had been done to lessen the confidence and regard Sister

St. Francis Xavier had previously entertained for the Bishop, nor was it quite just to accuse her of a change of sentiment. Circumstances, probably, were making her more wary. Reticence sometimes ensues even when we have the most perfect confidence, because of a little perplexity, an incomplete understanding that makes us fearful of committing indiscretions, or of being wanting in delicacy should we be ordinarily confiding. These are the little prunings that the divine Gardener makes from time to time, that the sap may be retained within the tree, whence is perfected that beautiful prudence, the essential characteristic of all virtue.

It were to be wished that a veil could be thrown over the sequence; but truth and justice must be manifested in order to set forth the true character of our servant of God, whose greatest trials and greatest virtues belong to this period of her life. Mother Theodore always regarded the Bishop as a very pious man prompted by the best motives. Never did an expression of bitterness or lack of reverence escape her in speaking of him. She would always say "He means well." She understood, too, how it sometimes happens that, without sin on either side, persons will be opposed to each other and be the cause of very keen suffering to each other. As their judgments do not coincide they follow what conscience dictates, and because the interests of truth are involved the combat is pursued with redoubled energy. Such things are permitted by God in His inscrutable ways to exercise the virtue of the elect. History is replete with such instances, and it seems that no one who tries to accomplish much in the interests of the heavenly kingdom can escape the painful ordeal,

for painful it certainly is; in fact, can a greater suffering be conceived than that of being persecuted by good people? St. Teresa says that it was her greatest suffering.

In this light Mother Theodore was accustomed to view these untoward happenings; she had been schooled to them from her infancy, and she saw therein the means of rapid spiritual progress. She insisted much on the value of this lesson. "Yes," she would say, "that is what faith teaches; it is the will of God. Let us be earnest and we shall not be slow to learn the lesson."

If at times she addressed her Bishop with fearless candor, that privilege had been accorded her by the freedom and simplicity of her former correspondence with him and the reciprocal familiarity which characterized the Bishop's letters to her. On the occasion of his attending the fifth Council of Baltimore in 1843, he said to her:

"You see, I do not write, I talk. I speak like a prattling child; but, then, it is only to you that I say all these things." Another time he wrote: "What use are those dignified and polished phrases which are found in your letters? Instead let there be frankness and simplicity, which you should have in all things, but above all in your intercourse with one whom you call director." And again he wrote: "The year is closing, the autumn has passed, and the usual illness has not returned. Hide yourself well, so that if it took the notion to return it would not be able to find you; but do not hide from me." "Two days ago I wrote to you, and now again. Why so? Because with you I have never finished." When writing to another Sister at St. Mary's he enclosed

a note to Mother Theodore, which reads: "I cannot send these few lines to Sister A—— without addressing a few words to you; you must return me a like favor. The longer your letters are the more I am pleased with them. I could not express all that I feel for you, you will know it only when the good God will allow you to see the most intimate feelings of my heart."

The Rt. Rev. H. Alerding, Bishop of Fort Wayne, in his "History of the Diocese of Vincennes," speaks thus of its second Bishop: "The Rt. Rev. Celestine de la Hailandière was a man of majestic appearance; his smile when pleased, full of grace and dignity, exercised a bewitching attraction which none could resist; his frown when displeased made everybody quail. . . . Now he saw dissatisfaction around him, caused by his active energy which, ever bent on pushing things the way he thought proper, brooked no contradiction. It grew all around him. The institutions he had established with so much labor were suffering. . . . But he never relented in his activity, and his fertile mind continued as before, on the alert for what could be done, and he would attend to all himself. Therein, however, was the chief source of all his troubles. He attended to everything personally, and although he had a Vicar General, a Superior of his Seminary, a Superior over the Community at St. Mary's, a rector for his cathedral, he would allow them to do hardly anything. All over the diocese as far as his hand could stretch out it was about the same. There was in consequence a general feeling of uneasiness, nobody knowing what he was to do or not to do—continual changes, the result of the varying necessities

attendant on the infant condition of affairs, but also of real and now loud dissatisfaction. He saw it. He felt it. He reproached himself for it. Yet his ardent and lofty spirit could not well check itself."

There is no dearth of epistolary correspondence between the poor Bishop and Mother Theodore, nor any want of respectful regard on either side. This is repeatedly expressed. The letters show how freely she communicated to him her desires, her aspirations, her disappointments, and her anxieties. In return he spoke openly of the many details embraced within the circumference of his episcopal charge; his trials, his pleasures, his reverses, his successes—she knew them all. The Bishop, being warm-hearted and of generous impulses, was tenderly paternal in sentiment. When happily disposed he treated every one with great affability, and the Sisters at St. Mary's had many proofs of his cordiality and genial interest. But the beautiful traits in his character were overshadowed by an unfortunate irascibility and fickleness. When oppressed with business, fatigue, or annoyance, he was apt to decide hastily and to act while under the influence of these various impressions; consequently he was often unduly severe and often mistakenly indulgent.

That he encountered many difficulties and hardships in the administration of his diocese is unquestionable; that he made immense sacrifices for it is also beyond doubt and claims grateful recognition. The territory over which his jurisdiction extended embraced the entire State of Indiana and half of Illinois. Six years before when his predecessor, the saintly Bishop Bruté, arrived at Vincennes the newly created diocese contained only

three priests—Father Lalumière, who had been ordained for Vincennes by Bishop Flaget[1] of Bardstown, of which diocese Indiana had formed a part; Father Fernding, who was in charge of a German settlement about a hundred miles distant; Father St. Cyr (lent for a year by Bishop Rosati of Saint-Louis), who was temporarily stationed at Chicago, then a small but promising town. This was scanty provision for the large number of Catholics found among the early settlers.

Although Vincennes was the first permanent settlement in Indiana, its existence dating back to 1702, it had not increased rapidly; its population fluctuated with the destinies of war that marked the eighteenth century. The inhabitants were mostly French traders and explorers from Canada, originally a French colonial possession. Notwithstanding the apostolic zeal of the religious orders—Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits—which during more than a century had been evangelizing the country, dividing their labors between the Indian tribes and the white settlements along the lakes

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[1] Bishop Flaget, first Bishop of Bardstown, Ky., was born in France in 1763. His course of philosophy was made in the university of Clermont, after which he entered the Congregation of St. Sulpice and was ordained priest. For several years after his ordination he filled the chair of theology in the seminary at Nantes. The terrors of the French Revolution led him to direct his eyes toward America. Archbishop Carroll received him with joy and appointed him to the distant mission of Vincennes, Ind. In December, 1792, he reached his post, but was recalled after two years and a half to fill a professorship in Georgetown College. In 1810 he was consecrated Bishop of Bardstown, Ky. He died in 1850 in the eighty-seventh year of his age, fifty-seven of which he had labored for the Church in America. ("History of the Catholic Church." John O'Kane Murray.)

and the Mississippi River, the light of faith could scarcely be kept burning. To bring the benefits of religion nearer to the straying people, it had been determined to establish a new see at Post Vincennes. In 1834 Rt. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté de Rémur was appointed its first Bishop.

The new prelate's greatest need was of priests for his diocese, colaborers who might revive the religious sentiments of many and add other conquests to the kingdom of the Church. To supply this need Bishop Bruté returned to France in 1836. He was a persuasive speaker; he also wielded a facile pen; so that whenever he appeared and pleaded for the wants of his flock, or whenever his articles found their way into the papers, he enkindled a flame of enthusiasm that was productive of very happy results.

Rennes was Bishop Bruté's native city. It was on the occasion of this visit that Mother Theodore first heard of Vincennes. She was directing a large institution there at the time and caught some sparks of the enthusiasm which the visiting prelate everywhere enkindled. The lively interest which he created drew such worthy priests to the diocese as Rev. Celestine de la Hailandière, whom he made his Vicar General at the suggestion of the Bishop of Rennes; Rev. John Corbe, destined by divine Providence for St.-Mary-of-the-Woods; Rev. Benjamin Petit, Rev. Julian Benoit, Rev. Maurice de St. Palais, who became the fourth Bishop of Vincennes, Rev. Augustine Bessonies, and Edgar Gordon Shawe, formerly of the British army, but at that time a seminarian at St. Sulpice. They were all exceptionally fine recruits for the new Bishop's work, eminent men in

both social and ecclesiastical circles. Yet what were so few laborers considering the vast area over which their ministrations were to extend!

The premature death of the holy Bishop Bruté left to his successor the responsibility of facing an immense task, that of administering a large diocese without a sufficient clergy to aid him, and without the pecuniary means to accomplish the work that was to be done. The diocese, however, owes much to the energy of Bishop de la Hailandière, and it is a subject of deep regret that his labors were not crowned with complete success.

## CHAPTER XXII.

CONTINUED TRIALS FOR THE COMMUNITY.—LETTER OF MOTHER MARY TO MOTHER THEODORE.—LETTERS FROM SISTER BASILIDE AND SISTER ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.—DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES AT THE ACADEMY.—MOTHER ANASTASIA BROWN.—THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE AT SAINT-PETER'S, IND.

RETURNING to the incident of the election, we find that two months had elapsed before Mother Theodore learned of her deposition and re-election. While the Bishop's letter on the subject occasioned surprise, no grave alarms were awakened until the particulars were received at Ruillé-sur-Loir a few days after the Bishop's letter as noted above. These were given in full with unfeigned simplicity by the Sisters at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. From the abstract preserved among the Annals of the Community we quote:

"The Bishop's first question was about the retreat; we replied that we wished to wait till our Mother's return, which we hoped would be in the autumn, fearing he would want to clothe in the habit and admit to profession some of whose fitness we did not feel satisfied. Hearing the objections the Bishop began to accuse Mother Theodore of despotism and several other offences. What he called her 'horrible fault' was the constancy she showed for the preserving of our Rules and Constitu-

tions. During two whole hours he endeavored by the most persuasive eloquence [he was truly very eloquent] and the most imposing authority to win over Sister St. Francis to his views.

"Among other things he said that to oppose the Bishop was to revolt against God himself; that he alone [the Bishop] had any authority over us, and that the last priest in the diocese had more power over us than our Superior General; that there was a way which seemed right to men but which led to eternal death; that one must be very proud or very blind to disobey the Bishop, etc." The transcriber of the records says: "This is written for those of our Sisters to whom perhaps similar trials may come. There are no more terrible threatenings than those which impute sin to us, nor can there be any vision more appalling than that which shows us what the price of our constancy is to be. Let the Sisters not be discouraged. Let them remain firmly united to their Mother as long as she herself remains faithful to her Rule."

The Annals continue: "The Bishop wrote to us later that upon reflection he was going to ask who would take their vows at the end of the retreat. Our reply was that we could not assume any such responsibility during our Mother's absence, not knowing sufficiently her opinion on the subject. In the meantime our chaplain received a letter for himself alone in which the Bishop requested our opinion on three things:

"1st. If we would receive Sister Celestia and Sister Austin should they present themselves.

"2d. Whether we would accept the establishment at Vincennes.

"3d. Whether we would leave to him the choice of the persons he would wish to place there.

"He added 'Say *yes* or *no*, and do not make the absence of the Mother and similar nonsense an excuse.'

"Sister St. Francis replied that as the Sisters were doing good in Vincennes we would be very loath to take their mission from them, and that the diocese was vast enough for them and for us. As to accepting their Sisters, if they were good subjects we should be very sorry to take them away from the Sisters of Charity, as we would not like the Sisters of Charity to take away our Sisters from us; and as to the Bishop's naming the Sisters for the establishment, she would acquiesce to that only when commanded.

"Sister Basilide's reply, though perhaps scarce as positive, was not more favorable. While our answer was on the way Father Corbe received a long letter for us which we had no permission to read, but only to have read to us as often as we should wish. In it the Bishop explained his rights as Bishop, which he said had been examined at the Council of Baltimore. His Lordship understood by his 'rights' the power to place and replace the Sisters, to change our Rules, etc.

"On the last day of the retreat the Bishop received the vows of two of the novices without knowing whether the Congregation would receive them. . . .

"On the Feast of the Assumption, after the noon recreation, the Bishop called the four professed, Sister Basilide, Sister St. Francis Xavier, Sister M. Liguori, and Sister Olympiade, and then sent for the newly professed whom he had admitted to vows the previous evening. The assembly was convoked in secret; the members

were ignorant of what would be the subject of deliberation. The Bishop announced that they were to proceed to the election of a Superior General, because he had deposed Mother Theodore, whose term of office had expired. Perhaps his Lordship forgot that Mother Theodore had been given to us as foundress, that she was then abroad with letters he himself had given her that she might present herself as such to the Bishops in France, though it is true that the humiliations and the fatigues she endured there for our Congregation could have made her pass for the least of all. The Bishop's announcement afflicted the Sisters as much as it surprised them. When the votes were counted they were all, save one, found to be for their deposed Mother. Sister Vincent, the Assistant Superior, who was absent from the retreat because of poor health, had not been notified to send her vote. The *séance* lasted about twenty minutes. The Bishop recommended secrecy regarding what had happened, and in this he was perfectly obeyed. The Community was ignorant for many years of this act; in fact, with very few exceptions, the Sisters hear of it now for the first t me. He invested Sister Basilide with authority during Mother Theodore's absence and charged Sister St. Francis Xavier to make a verbatim account of the election. She obeyed, and as the process was exact, it proved so ridiculous, even to the Bishop, that he refused to sign it."

Mother Mary thus informs Mother Theodore of the communications she had received from Indiana regarding these events:

I send you a letter from Mr. Hardy which seems pressing, but I hold until your arrival here one for Sister M. Cecilia,

which is, I believe, from your Bishop. I have one from your Sisters also; not certain that it would find you at Paris I will not mail it. The most interesting thing they say is that Sister Mary and Sister Agnes took their vows at the retreat which was held in the month of August, and that after this retreat the election of the Superior General was held; that you obtained all the votes save one, and that consequently you are the Superior of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. . . . To conclude, I persist in thinking that your presence is of absolute necessity at St. Mary's, and that all the gold of France could not repay you for the injury that your absence may cause to the spiritual good of your nascent Congregation.

Provide yourself with a good dose of protection at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of Victory, in order to go and sustain a combat with no other arms than humility, meekness, and firmness. The one will cause you to examine the proposals that may be made to you with diffidence in your own judgment; the other will lead you to proceed in all things in a becoming manner; and firmness will not permit you to take part in anything that appears contrary to the good of your Institute, but to suffer it with patience and courage, when by Christian and religious means you could not have prevented it. Ask all these graces from our holy Mother before you leave the spot where she loves to pour down her favors. If you would like to see Sister St. Charles before your departure you must return to us by way of Orléans; Sister Eudoxie is also there.

Make haste, my dear daughter Theodore, fly to Vincennes to mend the broken platters; watch over your flock; prevent the enemy from sowing cockle among the good seed and the wolf from entering the sheepfold. If your voyage to France has been necessary, your presence at home is still more so.

Sister Basilide's appointment by the Bishop to act as Superior instead of Sister St. Francis whom Mother Theodore had left in charge, placed her in a most embarrassing position. She tells all to Mother Theodore with her usual frankness and confidence. The closing of the scholastic year introduces her letter; she then says:

But I must come to my subject, although it costs me so much to treat of these matters. Poor Basilide! Could I ever have imagined that I should have to occupy myself with things so delicate and so important, when there is question of deciding whether a Community which is beginning to do so much good will continue or be destroyed! By my last letter I gave you to understand that the storm was over; that our good Father Corbe had succeeded, as he thought, in quieting the Bishop. The next post brought us another letter, but addressed to Father Corbe, who was to read it to us. In this our Bishop explained at full length all his rights, which are not few, for it seems that the Bishop of Mans has resigned all to him regarding us, even the power of changing our holy Rules, and then we shall depend on no one but himself. No doubt in that event we shall see novelties. I do not know whether his Lordship will write to Bishop Bouvier of this, but if you consent to all and return to the diocese, I beg you to find me the means of going back to Ruillé at your return, for I proposed but one question to Sister St. Charles when she asked me to come here; it was: Shall we be separated from Ruillé? Receiving her answer in the negative I started, uneasy about nothing else. Now if it is going to be otherwise, if the Constitutions are to be changed, I should think myself to be in another Community, and so I should really be; therefore I shall withdraw myself, for I would give my life rather than leave the Community

which has raised me and which is dearer to me than my own family. Since you know everything so well I write this to you rather than to our Superiors at Ruillé, who could not judge so correctly of these matters as yourself. I have not told you yet of all the proposals that were in another letter to Father Corbe. Truly this good priest is admirable for the zeal and devotedness he evinces in our regard. How many others would have abandoned the cause! Far from that, seeing things carried to such a pitch that it became difficult to treat of them by letter, he went to Vincennes in order to try to settle everything. . . . I wrote to his Lordship by Father Corbe; he answered me in a few words, never referring to what I had written except by saying that he was not of my opinion and that he was more determined than ever to break off from Ruillé; that I might write it and tell it to whom I pleased, and that he will not draw back before any difficulties.

Oh, dear Mother! did you think that your poor Sister St. Francis and Sister Basilide would have so much trouble during your absence? Undoubtedly you did not. Still it is a great blessing that no one here seems to notice anything. Sister has been sick for several days; to-day she is better. No one can know what she suffers mentally. As for myself, I have had to concentrate all within myself and yet amuse the others, who are lonesome on account of your long absence, which, I am sure, is no longer for any one than for me; however, if your presence is necessary some time longer in order to regulate everything the better, I willingly consent thereto so as to be the more quiet afterwards. I will not say anything of our temporalities; Sister Olympiade must have given you full details; she must have told you of the theft and how we were for three weeks without a cent; but we were in want of nothing, no more than if we had millions.

A more joyous tone resounds throughout the finishing paragraph of this letter.

Our little distribution of prizes at the Academy will be more public than last year. So far everything goes on wonderfully well. God is evidently with us. Everything has been in readiness for three days. Would you believe it, we have not spent a cent, and yet our premiums are very pretty? Perhaps the Bishop will not be here to distribute them. Father Shawe will arrive to-morrow to conduct the examinations and make an address. Judge Huntington of Terre Haute will favor us with one also; and if we wished a third, Mr. Owens of Springfield, who has come for his daughter, will make one.

To this letter Sister St. Francis adds:

I may tell you that if it should be necessary for you to remain in France some days longer, do so in all assurance. So far everything goes on well exteriorly. If we suffer the Community does not; this is the opinion of our good Father Corbe, who admires the protection of Providence upon it. You will never come back too soon for the desire we all have of seeing you again; but I fear you will suffer still more with us, owing to the resolution of the Bishop, than you have until now. *Fiat*, oh, yes, *fiat* eternally!

The next letter Mother Theodore received from Sister Basilide contained good tidings:

To-day, three years ago [Sept. 8] we received holy communion for the first time in our adopted country. After my communion this morning I prayed much for your speedy return. Thus far we have had no new difficulties; we enjoy peace interiorly and exteriorly; every one seems happy as far as can be without you. Two postulants, however, give Sister St. Francis a little thread

to unravel. If they continue, I do not know what will become of them.

Dear Mother, I hope that when you arrive you will find several new boarders, two in particular, upon whom you did not reckon. Mrs. Williams came last week to pay us a visit. She begged pardon in most touching terms, which shows very well that, as she assured us, she had been greatly deceived. [She harbored Sister Aloyse, the dismissed novice, who gave so much trouble.] She begged me to express to you the pain she feels for all that she has done. She implores us to receive her two daughters. Father Corbe and we think we cannot refuse her; he considers the efforts this lady has made to humble herself thus and make reparation a miracle of grace. We shall soon have another postulant, our good Miss J. Brown, who is so anxious to enter the novitiate that she is unwilling to await your return. We are convinced that you would not refuse her. I could heartily wish that we had a dozen such. You see the good God always comes to our aid. I hope you also feel His assistance, and that at present you are more encouraged than you were at Anjou, where you met with so many humiliations. Well, God be praised! He will make that turn to His glory.

Sister St. Francis again encloses a note with Sister Basilide's letter. She says:

A lady came, a convert two years ago, who proposes an establishment at Terre Haute. She would donate Judge Lexington's house, reserving only one room for herself. She has abundant means and has but one little daughter, who is nine years old. She spent three days at the Academy. She is a widow and has some thoughts of a religious vocation. We will need an answer by spring, when

we hope you will be with us. Perhaps God wishes to make use of this lady. Let us pray.

It would be a very great pleasure to us to present a life-sketch of the postulant to whom Sister Basilide has introduced us, but her modesty would not appreciate our good intentions; so we shall only say that Mother Anastasia Brown is still at St. Mary's, the edification of all who have the privilege of her acquaintance. Upon the death of Mother Theodore in 1856, Mother M. Cecilia succeeded to the office of Superior General, and Mother Anastasia was chosen her assistant; at the same time she occupied the post of directress of the boarding-school. At the end of twelve years she was elected Superior General, her administration lasting six years, after which she passed the intervening years directing establishments in various cities until 1880, when she again assumed direction of the Academy, where she remained nine years. In 1890 the voice of the General Chapter again elected her to the Council, this time as second assistant to the present Superior General, Mother M. Cleophas. After six years passed in the fulfilment of this office she was retired from active service.

Mother Theodore was delighted with the good tidings her Sisters at St. Mary's were able to send; she was distressed, however, at Sister Basilide's determination to return to Ruillé, for she esteemed her highly and would have considered her withdrawal an affliction for the Community at St. Mary's and a personal grief to herself.

Returning to the Annals we read:

The Bishop did not discuss the establishment of Vincennes during that visit, so we were hopeful that he had relinquished the idea; he even reproached Sister St.

Francis for having rejected all his proposals and for having been influenced by Mother Theodore; but in the month of October he wrote to us saying that he had notified Sister St. Vincent to keep herself in readiness to start, without telling her for what place; he also told us to vest Sister M. Magdalen and Sister Philomene and send them to Vincennes. We expressed our reluctance to send Sister M. Magdalen, the only Sister who could teach English to the postulants, and we begged him to recall the Sisters from Saint-Francisville; since that establishment was now in another diocese he could easily suppress it, as he had contemplated, and thus get Sister Liguori and Sister Austin for Vincennes. He refused to do so. Some days later we learned that the Bishop had succeeded in obtaining the consent of the Superior of the Sisters of Charity for those of Vincennes to leave their Congregation, and without speaking again of their admission to ours he wrote to us that whether they would remain at Vincennes for a time or go to St. Mary's at once, we would do well to give them the habit immediately. The Bishop's notions seem always to have been pious. He admired his Sisters of Charity, but he wanted them to be Sisters of Providence, for whom, as a Community, he had great affection.

The Bishop also had some correspondence with Sister Basilide on the matter, as is shown in his letter of October 8, 1843, and a week later he wrote to her again as follows:

Events are pressing on us here faster than you suppose. Yesterday the Sisters of Charity told me they were going to withdraw; hence those of St. Mary's must come as soon as possible. I will send to Jasper for Sister St. Vincent. Send me the two I asked for. They will not grant Sister Celestia the dispensation she needs; I think,

however, that they will end by yielding; she would draw us, or you, out of trouble for one class and the music.

I hope to be at St. Mary's soon. I am detained here by important business,—the Sisters' withdrawal, the Seminary, new appointments, moving, etc.; then the money is wanting.

Coming back to Sister N——, how will you rid yourself of her? Do you not fear that she may go to Terre Haute and increase the number of malcontents? It would be better for her to go down to New Orleans; do you wish me to write to Father Perché on the subject? You must have learned that at Fourgières they have dissuaded that good musician who wished so much to come to us. May the holy will of God be done in your regard and in mine! . . .

It is to be understood that in having Sister St. Vincent come here you consent to leave Sister M. Joseph Superior at Jasper. Their school is not large and two Sisters will suffice unless their health should give way.

I received a letter from your Mother, dated the 17th of September. It is my opinion that she will not come back this year. The letters written from St. Mary's to her have been received; she complains of their contents, but I have greater reason to complain. Be so good as to assure the writers at St. Mary's that their letters have produced all the effect they intended.

Returning to the Annals we read further:

We have said that the Bishop called Sister St. Vincent to Vincennes without having spoken of it to us. Before learning our opinion on the matter he wrote:

*Be it well understood that in having Sister St. Vincent come to Vincennes you consent to let Sister M. Joseph remain as Superior in Jasper.* This Sister was only a novice.

After he had told us positively that he could not change in his choice of Sister M. Magdalen, while we were begging him to take Sister M. Liguori, he wrote us: "The good God has just sent us Sister Celestia: you may, therefore, keep Sister M. Magdalen. I have no desire for her coming; but if you keep her you should send a religious dress for Sister Celestia: she cannot teach in a secular dress." We sent Sister M. Magdalen to Vincennes. When the Bishop gained the three Sisters that he wanted, he wrote us that he had had Sister Liguori and Sister Augustine come to Vincennes to recreate themselves, and he added: "What do you want to do with them after that?" His Lordship knew that we desired them to take the place of the two novices we had been compelled to vest. "For my part," said he, "I wish them to go to Saint-Peter's, where the Brothers were."

Before receiving this expression of his desire to send our Sisters to Saint-Peter's, we had learned through Father Lalumière that on the preceding Sunday the Bishop announced to the congregation [of Saint-Peter's] the arrival of the Sisters and had fixed and signed the conditions of the new establishment. Our answer was not considered at all, and the Bishop sent a seminarist to conduct the Sisters to their new mission.

They were given seventeen dollars to buy a cow; they had to borrow a bed; they were without covering; they had neither cup nor plate; the locks and latchets of the doors had been taken off; there was no table, only a small board whereon to make their bread; and when they needed a cooking utensil they had to borrow it. In a word, they had nothing with them but their courage and devotedness. Sister M. Liguori was soon attacked by a serious illness, and as she could not get the necessary remedies, she kept the germ of that disease which carried her off at so early an age.

Bishop de la Hailandière soon wrote that a fourth Sister was necessary for Vincennes. We answered that we had no American subject to send, excepting Sister Stanislaus, whose vocation was doubtful; in fact, she had told us she was only waiting Mother Theodore's return, when she intended going back to the world. It seemed to us that it would be very imprudent to send this young person to Vincennes, when she would take off the habit a few months later.

The Bishop came to St. Mary's the following month [January], bringing with him one of his nephews. The young man told us that in a few days he would take Sister Stanislaus with him to Vincennes, that the Bishop had intrusted her to him. Sister Stanislaus made all her preparations without saying anything to us, instructed to do so by the Bishop, and when she had left St. Mary's with the stranger, the Bishop asked us in the evening who had sent Sister Stanislaus to Vincennes. He then proceeded to give a religious instruction to the Community and asked the Sisters whom they should obey, supposing that he and their Mother Superior were of a different opinion. Before any one had time to reply he said: "I am the one you should obey."

Two months previous he wanted to send two Sisters to keep house for the young farm-hands, and designated Sister Stanislaus as one of them. The Sisters were to sleep at the farm and thus be nearly always in the company of men. It was only the strong opposition of Father Corbe that induced the Bishop to desist from requiring this kind of service. He declared that he would not hear the confessions of those who lived thus. He also felt it his duty vigorously to oppose the Bishop in his plan of sending all the Sisters and novices to the Academy parlor to entertain the visitors. . . .

While the Bishop was still at St. Mary's in January (1844) a letter from the Bishop of Mans and one from Mother Theodore reached them relative to the events that had transpired at St. Mary's during Mother Theodore's absence.

BISHOP BOUVIER'S LETTER TO BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE.

LE MANS, Nov. 8, 1843.

MY LORD:

Through your letter of April 30th you direct good Sister Theodore to me and recommend her in a very special manner. Notwithstanding all the collections to which we have had recourse, and which end by discouraging charitable souls on whom the burden always falls, I have made it a duty towards you, my Lord, towards the good Sister and her institution, to assist her with my most active concurrence. Thank God, my efforts have not been entirely useless; she will give you an account of the proceedings and of the results she has obtained; she has not spared herself and has shown a rare aptitude for this sort of agency, of itself disagreeable enough.

Having learned that the Propagation of the Faith Society had granted funds directly to M. Moreau, I wrote to the treasurer at Paris, M. Choiselet, and recommended Sister Theodore and her foundation to him; be it well understood, my Lord, without any prejudice to you. I expressed myself formally, and, by the way, I have been circumstanced several times to make the observation that your manner of administration was judged of too severely without giving you a hearing. M. Choiselet answered me that the Society for the Propagation of the Faith had for maxim to give nothing directly for institutions of women; but that in your *exposé* you had included

the Sisters of Providence for quite a large sum; that the Council of Paris had taken into consideration the motives of this request and had in consequence given you an allowance for them; that he would now give Sister Theodore an order for what was destined for her. What she has obtained through your recommendations, and mine in accord, has been given directly and only for her institution. No other use could be made of it. Hence I feel assured that with the aid of this resource and with what the society hitherto granted you for them, these devoted Sisters will extricate themselves little by little from their financial embarrassments.

Permit me, my Lord, to speak to you with fraternal liberty in the charity of Our Saviour. The excellent Superior General [Mother Mary], who has just been re-elected unanimously, is full of uneasiness in regard to the future of her daughters in America. It appears that you thought you might decide alone as to the admission of subjects, as to their vocation, their profession, etc., without making any account of the Constitutions and Rules. She entreated me to make an observation to you, namely, that a Congregation could not under pain of death be governed in this manner. The Bishop must have the superintendence and the supervision; but he must leave the body its free action and abstain from whatever could appear arbitrary. He might not consent to the admission of a subject whom he believed to be dangerous, nor accept a contract he would judge prejudicial to the Congregation, or to one of the houses of the Congregation; but never must he force or even urge the admission of any one whomsoever, nor dispose of the temporal interests himself in anything whatever. The Sisters have the management, as I said before, under his superintendence, because he is their guardian and their protector; but he does not manage for them. It is in

following largely this way, consecrated by the experience of centuries, that I have the consolation of seeing my two beautiful Congregations of Evron and of Ruillé develop with admirable prosperity, as also the other edifying Communities with which my diocese is happily ornamented and enriched. At Rome a long examination was made of the Constitutions and Rules of the Sisters of Ruillé. It was not thought that they should be solemnly approved so soon, but the Pope highly praised them by a special decree. This is already a great deal. I believe I shall give you pleasure by sending you a copy of this decree.

If, as I have been told, you are shortly going to make a journey to France, I hope you will do me the honor of paying me a visit. Then we can speak at length of the Sisters and many other things.

I cannot understand, my Lord, how you could have deposed Sister Theodore and caused an election in her absence, while she was abroad in quality of Superior and with your full consent given in writing. Happily the fact is not known here, for I can assure you it would have produced a very bad effect.

(Signed) J. B., Bp. of Mans.

The Annals tell us that the annoyance the Bishop felt at this letter was extreme. He wept and severely blamed Sister St. Francis for having written to the Superiors in France all that had happened. He confided to Sister Basilide his intention of not allowing Mother Theodore to return to St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, and of appointing *her* to be the Superior, since she understood so well how to manage the affairs of the Congregation. Sister Basilide was exceedingly embarrassed, but feeling herself inadequate to the task of remon-

strating with the Bishop, or fearing that he would disband them should they further resist him, and expecting, moreover, that he would soon reverse his decision, she did not offer the opposition that one would expect to see in such circumstances. This had the appearance of weakness, but it was only momentary. Sister Basilide was at heart sincerely devoted to Mother Theodore, and had a greater share than any other Sister in the sorrows that these events brought to the Community.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

MONSEIGNEUR FORBIN JANSON AND MOTHER THEODORE.—HER INTERVIEW WITH M. MARTIN DU NORD, KEEPER OF THE SEALS.—AUDIENCE WITH KING LOUIS PHILIPPE AND QUEEN AMELIA.—THE STORM AT SEA.—THE URSULINES OF NEW ORLEANS.—ST. ANN'S CHAPEL.

It is not surprising to find Mother Theodore resolved to undertake the homeward voyage at once, although the winter had set in. Mgr. Forbin Janson, Bishop of Nancy and Toul, who had always evinced a lively interest in the mission of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods and its venerated foundress, sent her the following note as soon as he heard of her decision:

Tell me, my dear daughter in Our Lord, what has been the result of our little ministerial conspiracy against your precipitate departure for New Orleans, where you will have to winter without any profit to your work, while two months longer journeying over France would bring you a plentiful harvest? Come to see me immediately, if you can, in my carriage; it will take you back or leave you where you wish, about eleven o'clock. Or else come to-morrow after three P.M. What is the hour of your departure, if you do go? It seems to me that you might wait here a day or two longer without inconvenience before leaving for Havre. I think it very probable that you will be authorized to remain two months longer.

✝ Forbin Janson, Bp. of Nancy and Toul.

Nancy, Nov. 20, 1843.

It was with pleasure that Mother Theodore was able to avail herself of the Bishop's kind invitation, even if she could not prolong her stay in France. Her interview with him was one of much consolation to her; aside from the fact that it was a part of her trial that the reasons inducing her speedy return were necessarily incommunicable to her friends who were so deeply interested in her work, and who were disposed to regard her resolution as imprudent, if not unresponsive to the efforts they were making in her behalf. It was a new occasion of suffering which she felt keenly, but she bore it with her usual magnanimity of soul, and nothing seemed capable of shaking her purpose, since those who understood exactly how matters were at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods advised her immediate return.

Two subjects had presented themselves for the Indiana mission; they were in readiness at Ruillé awaiting the moment of departure, which was fixed for November 23d. This seems to be the date on which Mother Theodore took final leave of her beloved Ruillé-sur-Loir, and of all those dear Superiors who felt for her as they could feel for no other, knowing, as they did, the cross that awaited her in the New World.

For particulars of the return voyage we shall have recourse again to Mother Theodore's journal.

Sister M. Cecilia and I had resolved to return to the United States by taking our passage on the lower deck, because of the expense of a first-class passage. God saw our good-will and was satisfied with that. He came to our aid in a very particular manner. Having gone to see the Castle of Brissac, only a league distant, I was calling forth Sister's admiration of the fine architecture that

makes this castle a specimen of mediæval grandeur, when some one came to say the Marchioness of Brissac would give us an audience. We had not solicited the favor because, having walked through the mud a considerable distance, we were not presentable in a drawing-room. However, we accepted the kind invitation and were received by the Marquis and Marchioness with marks of the most delicate attentions. The next day they came to return our visit at M. Perrat de la Bertaudière's, where we were guests, and a storm obliged them to remain there all night and a part of the next day. They presented us their offering and gave us letters of recommendation for some persons in the capital who were most noted for their charity. Not having been able to go to Paris until after the retreat at Ruillé, we found the residences of these people deserted. One letter, however, remained, and it was addressed to Mlle. La Brouche at the Chancery. Thinking that it would be of no service we did not try to present it. The Ministers of Louis Philippe resided there and what could two poor Religious expect? More than once we passed the Place Vendôme without ever turning our eyes towards the *bureau du ministre*. This time Sister M. Cecilia pressed me to make an attempt with the letter I still held. I felt the greatest reluctance to present myself at the Chancery. Having refused Sister's entreaties up to the present I now yielded, but it was through pure complacence that I did so. Upon presenting ourselves we learned that Mlle. La Brouche was the governess of the family of M. Martin du Nord, Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice and of Religious Worship. She received us very kindly and promised to speak to M. du Nord in our behalf. As a result of her kindness we were granted an audience with him the next morning at nine o'clock. He proved himself a most devoted father to us. "You must write," said he, "to the Queen. I will deliver the

letter to her Majesty myself. Ask for an audience; nothing more." We followed his advice and Monsieur le Garde des Seaux not only carried the letter himself to Saint-Cloud, but not being able to see the Queen, he gave it to the King and begged his Majesty to be our advocate with his royal consort. At the end of a week an answer came informing us that the Queen would receive us at the Tuileries at 12.45 that very day. We were there at the appointed hour and were immediately ushered into the Queen's presence. She was most gracious, wanted to know everything about our convent in America, what our resources were, what good we could do, what kind of people we met, everything, in fact, like one who had always known us. She showed special attention to my travelling companion, Sister M. Cecilia, spoke to her in English, saying beautiful things about the religious life; in fine, having manifested the most tender sympathy for our work she asked what we desired of her. We replied that we should consider it a signal favor to have our passage paid. She immediately answered: "Your passage shall be paid; how many are you?" When we had told her that we would be four, two postulants and ourselves, she said: "But that is not enough; you will need something for yourselves when you are in the Woods. I will solicit the King, and my children will contribute; we must help you to save souls." And then with a look of exultation she said: "Ah! yes, Sisters, let us save souls!" There was in her manner, her eyes, but above all in her voice, so intimate a conviction of the price of a soul that my heart was touched by it and is, even yet, upon the recollection of it.

During the course of this conversation, which had become quite familiar, I said *Mother* to her. Perceiving my mistake through a momentary distraction I begged her Majesty to pardon me. "That is right," she said;

"call me your mother; it is a name that is very dear to me."

Madame Adelaide, the Queen's sister, also received us in her apartments with great kindness; but she feared the Queen's liberality. Having said to her Majesty, "My sister, if you are willing, we will give five hundred francs to Sister Theodore," the Queen answered her with dignity: "No, sister, I promised to pay their passage; it will be paid."

Madame Adelaide said that the Queen did not know to what she was engaging herself, and seeing the numerous good works in which she took part she felt obliged to restrain her too generous heart. These thoughts, however, did not trouble us; it is true her Majesty had not asked the cost of the voyage, but she had spoken sweet words which went straight to the heart, consoling and strengthening words that poor solicitors seldom heard; for how many times had we not gone up and down several flights of stairs to receive only a franc given with contempt! This time it had not been so and my heart, full of gratitude, wanted to go to the sanctuary of holy Mary, to thank her for having reserved this day of consolation for us.

It was on the occasion of this visit to Notre Dame de Victoire that Mother Theodore had the happiness of securing the aggregation of the Community to the Archconfraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners. In forwarding the authentics to her the pious curé, Rev. D. Desgenettes, writes:

I experience a very great joy in sending the Act of Aggregation. We shall become stronger by the help of your earnest prayers, and I doubt not but our blessed

Mother, already so benign, so liberal toward us, will grant us still more promptly, more abundantly, the conversion of our poor erring brethren.

At the moment of embarking another proof of the Queen's kindness reached the Sisters. It was her own portrait beautifully executed in color. This they appreciated very highly, and to the present day the picture of good Queen Amelia greets the eye of visitors to the library of St. Mary's Institute, where they learn the story of charity coming from the throne of France under the Bourbon Dynasty, and behold a mark of the gratitude which memory keeps alive in the hearts of those who were befriended by the charitable but ill-fortuned Queen.

Accompanying the portrait was a lunch-basket prepared by her Majesty from her own table.

What Sister St. Francis said of Mother Theodore while the former was in New York is now corroborated by Sister Mary Cecilia's observation during the time that she travelled with her Mother General:

It is marvellous how our Mother has gained friends everywhere. I do not know how she does it; she does nothing to ingratiate herself, yet she has everybody in enthusiastic admiration of her.

It was owing to this great power of personal magnetism possessed by Mother Theodore that she was enabled to win sympathy for her work. It had been manifested at Rennes, as we have seen, and also at Soulaines; later it effected great results in her sphere as foundress, but not without the price of far greater efforts than she had hitherto thrown into her mission. Conquests in the spiritual order would be more remarkable in her future

career than the triumphs she achieved in the material order; herein lies her glory, and the accomplishment of the precept that bade her *seek the things that are above;* that having glorified God in His work, exulting in triumph she might praise Him forever.

The voyage begun on the ninth of December was full of incidents. Mother Theodore sent a detailed account of it to her good friends, Messrs. Veuillot and Aubineau, which was published in the *Univers*. It afterwards appeared in the book entitled "Heroines of Charity." The article being too lengthy for insertion in these pages, we shall quote only the chief incident, namely, the storm at sea. After relating how the *Nashville* had started without them, which obliged them to take a rowboat in pursuit, and how they were detained five days in the Channel by a calm, she says:

The weather during the next few days was splendid; until the 25th [Christmas Day] so hopeful were we of a good voyage that I expected to have but two words to say about it—that it was prosperous and monotonous. Little did I dream of those terrible scenes which I must now describe. In the night between Saturday and Sunday the wind changed. On Monday towards five o'clock in the evening it commenced to blow furiously and the waves rose to a prodigious height. The captain recognized the danger in a moment and put the ship to drive before the wind. So fierce was the wind that it took the sailors more than two hours to reef the main sail alone. The noise of the waves breaking over the frail vessel was like the report of a cannon. We thought that each successive moment would be our last. We were shut up in our little cabins, six feet long by four in breadth, a space scarcely larger than a grave. Sister M. Cecilia and I occupied one

cabin, the postulants another. I need not tell you that we did not sleep; death seemed too near—we prayed.

Those ocean heaps, those thunderings of mighty waters that kept rolling over our heads, had in them something so awful that not hoping alone to appease the anger of God, for such it seemed, I went in search of our young postulants. We then began prayers in common, offering up to God the sacrifice of our lives with all the earnestness in our power. The waves seemed impatient to accept it and to put an end to that terrible scene. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning; we were bathed in perspiration from the mere fatigue occasioned by the violent motion of the vessel and the exertions we had to make in order to keep from falling. The billows struck the ship with redoubled fury, and during one shock, more fearful than the rest, the water burst in at a distance of only ten feet from us, and rushing through a broken port-hole threatened to inundate our cabin. Poor Sister M. Cecilia exclaimed: "Oh, the time for us to die has come. Mother, take me near you." But no; the hour had not yet come. The captain, followed by one of the sailors, rushed up to stop the opening, and almost succeeded in making fast the port-hole by nailing boards and canvas over it; they could not entirely prevent the water from reaching us. The sea then caused another disturbance on deck by breaking asunder some ropes and pulleys; three huge chains which held the boats in which the animals were confined were broken; some were swept away by the waves, the remainder were left on the brink of the yawning abyss. The poor passengers amidships were drenched completely through; some were praying, others weeping; all believed their last moment had come. But they that go down to the sea in ships on the midst of the great waters, these have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep; and it is their duty to give glory

to Him and to tell His wonderful works to the children of men.

We have a lively sense of this sweet obligation; and it is a pleasure to relate it to you who are so well able to appreciate the gracious acts of God. At eight o'clock the wind ceased; at nine the captain informed us that the danger was over for the present. He did right to say "for the present," for in a winter's voyage on the ocean, as in that from earth to heaven, we are never really out of danger until we are in port.

The clouds were of a yellowish hue, the atmosphere was dense, and although the wind no longer raged, yet the sea continued to heave and to utter, as it were, ominous groans. Tuesday was spent in profiting by this treacherous calm to repair the damage of the previous night. The fireplaces and several other things that had been displaced by the storm were restored. But we employed ourselves in giving thanks to God. Towards evening a gale sprang up, and our poor fowls, that had lost their house the night before, were carried off into the sea, together with a pretty little rabbit with which we had made so intimate an acquaintance that it used to creep uninvited into our pockets. In the night the renewed tossing of the vessel caused all our hopes to vanish. The morning of the next day, Wednesday, brought with it the wind and storm again, with a repetition of the same scenes of horror as before, only in a more frightful degree. The *Nashville* was again brought to, and the ropes were coiled to prevent their being caught by the wind. This second storm began about eight o'clock; an hour after our only boat was swept away, and with it all hopes of escape in case of shipwreck. You cannot conceive how frightful it is to see nothing between ourselves and eternity but a few planks nailed together against which the winds and waves have let loose all their fury. The Holy Ghost

has revealed to us those feelings of anguish in Psalm cvi. 26, 27.

Oh, yes, true it is that the soul melts and pines away at the sight of danger when one is lifted up to the heavens by the waves and then hurled down again to the depths. Not a billow but dragged away with it something from off the deck; the brooms, the pails, the benches were quickly engulfed; they seemed to say to us as they fell into the sea, "To-day for us, to-morrow for you." It was not yet four o'clock in the afternoon and darkness was already spread over the sky. If a storm is dreadful by day, it is still more awful by night. The lamps cannot be lighted, nor can anything be distinguished save the white foam of the billows, which seem greedy for their prey.

We assembled together for prayers. We looked no more for repose in this world; and though the tossing of the ship threw us all into perspiration, the thought of our weariness did not enter our minds. We had begun our devotion of the Way of the Cross, offering anew the sacrifice of our lives. In spite of the terrors of our weak nature, we were all able to say to Him with confidence, *My God, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.* We also addressed ourselves to our good Mother, for it was Mary who had chosen our ship, and we had made a vow to her immaculate heart. In examining if at the period of undertaking my voyage I had had any human views in the selection of our route, my conscience reassured me. I had entrusted all to Mary. I do not know how long the devotion of the Way of the Cross lasted. What strength the soul draws from prayer! In the midst of the storm, how sweet is the calm that is felt in the Heart of Jesus! After we had ended the Way of the Cross we felt ourselves stronger, and Our Lord seemed to say to us, as heretofore to the disciples, *Now rest a while.* I persuaded my Sisters to try to sleep; I remained watching by their side. When

looking upon those dear children I asked Our Lord whether a frightful death was the hundred-fold that He had promised to those who leave all to follow Him. I prayed Him to pardon my weakness and that He would give me some little token of hope. Opening a book of devotion, I lighted upon this passage of Psalm cvi.: *They cry to the Lord in their affliction and He maketh the waves to be still.*

Shortly after the captain came to tell us that the danger was now over, but that he feared another storm in which the rocking would be more intolerable than ever. It was then four in the morning. I thanked God with all my heart when I learned that we were out of danger for the present at least; for I must confess that it cost me a great pang to resign myself to die without seeing once more our dear home, St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Returning thanks to our heavenly Father in common, we crept out of our cabins; it was impossible to stand erect; we reeled like intoxicated men. On deck we learned that a child eight years of age had died during the night, some said of terror, others that he had perished of hunger; for ever since the first storm the passengers of the lower deck had not been able to prepare their food, all their kitchen utensils having been swept away. I shall never forget the scene of the burial. It was ten o'clock in the morning; the sky was overspread with dark clouds through which the sun occasionally darted a yellowish-red light. When all was ready a port-hole was opened and a plank painted black, six feet long and three broad, was hung over the deep. The body of the child wrapped in a winding sheet was placed upon it, a large stone being attached to the feet. The deep silence was broken by the captain, who read some prayers; the father shed a few tears, the mother seemed unmoved. In a moment all was over. The passengers withdrew, apparently untouched by the scene;

some even smiled; thus does infidelity deaden hearts. Alas! if I only knew whether the child were baptized!

Unfavorable weather signs appeared again in the afternoon; it was dark at four o'clock; at five the waves rose with such fury that Madame F——, a lady occupying the adjoining cabin, her sister, and daughter begged to join in our prayers. We joyfully granted leave, and those good creoles have continued to come and take part in our devotional exercises.

Jammed, bruised, and knocked against one another we began again to pray, expecting that God would soon call us to Himself. We had no means of estimating the dangers of the ship otherwise than by a small window which when the sea was calm was fourteen or fifteen feet above the surface, but which now was constantly plunged beneath the waves which deluged us. I had inserted a blanket into the opening, but it was thrust back by the violence of the waves, and I noticed that little globules of phosphoric light shot out from beneath my fingers. The storm increased in violence and we began once more the Way of the Cross, thinking that this time surely we would not live to finish it. Happy are those who are able to pray! Towards two o'clock we completed our holy exercise, in which, for the third time, we offered up the sacrifice of our lives. Nevertheless, I felt great confidence in my heart at this extreme moment, as we had vowed a Mass to St. Ann of Auray and a memorial chapel that would be a lasting monument both of our danger and our gratitude. Yet the storm seemed to be still increasing, and my Sisters were desirous of making other vows; this I would not allow, telling them that we ought to stay calmly by the cross of Jesus, and await in peace the termination of our agony. Poor Sister M. Cecilia had great difficulty in resigning herself to death by drowning. Oh, how much she suffered! I recommended them all to take some rest,

and so fatigued were they that they required little urging. For some minutes now there was a complete silence; then suddenly it was broken by an extraordinary noise, a crash as of the complete disjointing of the whole vessel. The ship had, in fact, been thrown upon the beam end, and was now under water. The keel was above the surface and the top of the masts below it. The water was rushing in through every opening. In a second our cot was well-nigh submerged; the sea also found its way into the hold, the lower deck, the cabins, and indeed everywhere. Some passengers of the lower deck burst their bounds and went half dressed to the captain to compel him to let them have a sort of boat in which the cow was kept, that they might escape from the *Nashville,* apparently sinking. Others, fiercer than American savages, drew their knives for the purpose of cutting their throats, in order to escape the horrors of a more tedious death. The cries, the confusion, the fright, the terror that prevailed are beyond description. We had, all of us, been thrown to the floor by the shock, but we kept clinging to one another that we might die together. Our continual prayer was: "O Jesus, O Mary, O St. Ann, have pity on us!"

The wind, which until now had been blowing so furiously from the southwest, veered round with the quickness of lightning, as the captain himself expressed it, and blew with the same violence from the northwest, reversed the wave which was engulfing us, and saved the ship. A few minutes more and it would have been too late. The tempest, though, continued to rage as before; but having just escaped so imminent a danger, we no longer felt afraid. *The gifts of God,* we said, *are without repentance.* We spent the following days in thanksgiving, though still exposed to the fury of sea and wind. A circumstance I am about to relate will show yet more clearly that God was protecting our ship in a visible manner. On New

Year's Day, at six o'clock in the morning, the captain ordered the sails to be reefed. They began with the largest, but the wind caught it inside. The whole crew, consisting of twelve men, got upon the yard, but all to no purpose. A short time after, the same yard, disburdened of its human load, which naturally would have been expected to break it had it been in any way damaged, fell of itself in two pieces, one on each side of the mainmast. If the yard had broken when the crew were upon it, they must all have perished. The damaged condition of our vessel hindered the captain from taking the Bahama route, where we would have been exposed to the currents from the Gulf of Mexico; so we sailed with a fair wind to the Antilles in the direction of Saint Domingo.

On the first of January, which was the thirty-fourth day of our voyage, we had still two thousand miles to travel. Our provisions were getting frightfully low; but God watching over us sent a small vessel in our direction the following day. It was thought that they might have provisions to spare, and on being signalled by the captain, came up to us and furnished us with maize, biscuit, and salt fish.

The remainder of the voyage having been prosperous, we pass on to the item that announces their safe arrival at New Orleans.

On the 27th we quitted the poor *Nashville*, in which we had so wonderfully experienced the protection of divine Providence. The Bishop, Mgr. Blanc, kindly sent his Vicar General to meet us. We were received by the good Ursuline Sisters, who lavished upon us the most hospitable and affectionate attentions. I need not say with what haste we proceeded to adore Our Lord in the tabernacle. At His feet we poured forth our thanksgivings and ardently

invoked the blessings of Heaven upon our dear friends beyond the sea. For true hearts there is no separating ocean; God is the ocean in whom they meet and are united; they live, they lose themselves in Him. This happy day of love and gratitude was a Saturday, the day consecrated to Mary, as was also the day of our first arrival in New York. But in this land of exile, happiness has no morrow. The very next morning when I was rejoicing in the privilege of assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, a burning fever compelled me to leave the church to take to my bed, on which I lay for several weeks, the object of the tenderest care on the part of the dear Ursulines. How compassionate, how beautiful, how universal is charity! These true spouses of Christ regarded me, not in the light of a troublesome stranger, but of a suffering Sister. There I saw that at all times and in all places true Religious have an inexhaustible fountain of charity in their hearts.

The Ursulines have a fine building at New Orleans; nevertheless, great as is the outward splendor of this Community, when I think upon the virtue of its inmates I cannot but reflect that *all the beauty of the King's daughter is from within.*

Visitors to St. Mary's are now attracted by a little chapel sequestered among the forest trees on a knoll midway between the convent and the cemetery; this, they are told, is St. Ann's Chapel, built by the saintly foundress to perpetuate the memory of her miraculous preservation during the fearful storm previously described. Mother Theodore's first care after reaching St. Mary's was to arrange for the fulfilment of her vow. A chapel was constructed of logs and lined with shells set in the plaster while moist. The artistic skill of the

Sisters produced therein a very quaint, but pleasing effect, the altar decorations, and the flowers as well, being all made of shells, some brought from France, but the greater number gathered from the Wabash by the young Sisters and novices. It became necessary at a later date to replace the log chapel by a more substantial structure. The present stone chapel is on exactly the same spot, has the same dimensions, and is still the Shell Chapel where St. Ann continues to be honored with pilgrimages, though it is a long time since the holy sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated in this cherished rural shrine.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

MOTHER THEODORE'S JOY TO BE AGAIN IN INDIANA.—LETTER OF MOTHER MARY, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR.—LETTER OF FATHER CORBE.—ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS INCORPORATED BY AN ACT OF THE INDIANA LEGISLATURE.—SEVERE ILLNESS OF THE FOUNDRESS.—BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE RETURNS FROM ROME.—HE PRESENTS RELICS TO MOTHER THEODORE.—THE SISTERS APPEAL FOR THE APPROVAL OF THEIR RULES.

Mother Theodore realized that difficulties were awaiting her at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods more painful than any she had hitherto encountered. Naturally she must have experienced great repugnance in returning to a field of labor where nothing but bitter conflicts was anticipated. But she felt the charm that Providence gives to difficult undertakings courageously embraced, and she gave expression to this thought when writing to her friends in France: "It was with unspeakable joy that I again saw the soil of my dear Indiana. I could have fallen down and kissed the ground. This was no longer for me the place of exile, but the portion of my inheritance, and I hope to dwell in it all the days of my life. I saluted the guardian angels of the State, and prayed them to take the souls of these poor people under their protection, especially those whom we may be called upon to benefit."

God's ways are not man's ways, even when the latter are directed solely and purely to His greater honor and glory. After a safe voyage as far as New Orleans, it was still to be six weeks before Mother Theodore would be reunited to her children, so much in need of their Mother at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Unable to proceed, she could only await God's time. *In His hands are both we and His works and all wisdom and the knowledge and skill of works.*[1]

Sister M. Cecilia and the two postulants were sent on to St. Mary's. It was a bitter disappointment to the Sisters to see them coming without Mother Theodore, but it made them more fervent in prayer for their Mother's recovery, and for the many graces of which they stood in pressing need at this critical time.

We have said before that the Bishop left St. Mary's fully determined never to allow Mother Theodore to return. "When Sister M. Cecilia passed through Vincennes," the Annals say, "she frankly made known to the Bishop the sentiments of respect and attachment she felt for her Superior. 'They taught her at Ruillé,' he wrote to Sister Basilide, 'to despise her Bishop.' Each word said in favor of Mother Theodore was called an insult to his episcopal authority. The resolution his Lordship had taken he seemed determined to execute. 'Should the Mother not sign the articles I shall present to her,' he said, 'she will not return to St. Mary's.'

"Father Corbe, fearing the consequences of the Bishop's intentions, wrote to him that he did not think Sister Basilide would be the one to negotiate peace, nor

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[1] Wisdom vii. 16.

did he think she would be useful at Vincennes when Mother Theodore would arrive. God blessed these few words, and heard the prayers that were addressed to Him incessantly for the afflicted Congregation." . . .

That the Bishop was mistaken in regard to Ruillé may be seen from the letter of Mother Mary to Sister Basilide:

RUILLÉ-SUR-LOIR [SARTHE], Sept. 23, 1843.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER:

Sister Theodore being at Paris, I believe I ought to write to you for the peace of your soul. It appears that you have not quite understood the end of your mission in America, and the conditions under which you have been given to your venerable prelate; that this causes misunderstandings and occasions very painful embarrassments in your intercourse with your Father and chief pastor, and that you mutually inflict pain on each other for want of being properly informed on questions that ought easily to explain themselves.

Six Sisters of Ruillé were given to the Bishop of Vincennes to form a Congregation of teaching Sisters in his diocese upon the model of the Community at Ruillé. The six Sisters given by Ruillé belong, and will always belong, to Ruillé, the parent Congregation. They remain free to return to it, with the consent, however, of the Bishop of Vincennes; but the Superiors of the Congregation of Ruillé cannot recall them, and this is based on the principle that what has been given cannot be taken back without committing an act offensive in itself and in its results. The subjects who join the Sisters at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods will be immediately subject to the Bishop of Vincennes, not to the Superiors of Ruillé. They do not pretend to exercise or retain any right over the new Congregation; so that, my dear daughter, in explaining well

the authority of Monseigneur the Bishop of Mans over our Congregation, you will find the measure of the authority of Monseigneur the Bishop of Vincennes. Endeavor to conform yourself to it.

You will, perhaps, feel sorry that the Congregation of Ruillé is now entirely separated from that of Vincennes; but, my dear daughter, how could you expect the Superiors of the Congregation at Ruillé to retain the responsibility of a numerous Community established at more than two thousand leagues from their place of residence? A General Superior must co-operate in all that is of importance in the Congregation of which she has charge; now how could she visit the establishments, take part in the acceptance or refusal of new houses or of subjects; how watch over the temporal or spiritual welfare of her Sisters settled in America? So, for all these reasons, you stand in greater need of the authority of your Bishop and of his kind charity. Without it you would not do the good that you are called to do.

I hope that, notwithstanding the estrangement your good Bishop shows for Ruillé, which wishes him so well, and which has proved it and will prove it again, that he will not find reason to complain of the advice we have given you. . . .

No doubt the inexperience of your Bishop will cause him to make some mistakes in the administration of a Congregation of women; but time will correct all; for example, if he has appointed priests to superintend the temporal affairs of the Sisters, the abuse and dangers of this measure will soon make him change his mind. Be quiet, he will do the same in regard to all the rest. I conjure you, my daughter, do not put the axe to the root for so many small things. Have patience and resignation; all will be settled for the best.

Your Congregation is called upon to do a great deal of

good in that country, and you will have the glory and the merit of having contributed to it.

Tell Sister St. Francis that I love her in America as I did in France. Communicate my letter to her and Sister St. Vincent ; also to your almoner if you judge it expedient.

All our Sisters love you, but no one is more attached to you than

Your friend,

SISTER MARY, Superior General.

P.S. The elections brought no change to the Council of the Superior General; she has been re-elected, I know not why nor how.

Father Corbe sent some lines to Mother Theodore while she was detained at New Orleans. His letter bears the date February 21, 1844, and says:

The Bishop has given me satisfactory explanations of what he has done. The more they are in his favor the more they condemn Sister Basilide; yet he seems moderate in her regard. He appears disposed to take every possible means of settling matters; however, do not believe that all is done. I have spoken very little about St. Mary's for special reasons; so come to us, and I hope, yes, I hope that all will be settled. The Bishop told me that he had advised you not to think of the past any more nor to listen to what might be told you by those in whom you cannot have confidence. Perhaps you have not followed this advice; it is difficult, but peace, the welfare, the very existence of the Community depend on such sacrifices. Let us know how to make them with courage where they are so essential. This life of pains will soon be over; what then will remain to us? Nothing but our good works, the sacrifices we shall have offered to God. Courage! Pray much; and God in strengthening you will enlighten you,

and will inspire you with the manner in which He wishes you to succeed in this work which is His own.

At the same time Sister Basilide wrote:

Permit me, my dear Mother, to tell you with my usual frankness and of which I could not repent no matter what may happen to me, that all our difficulties place you under the necessity to act with the greatest prudence with our good Bishop in your first interview with him, and to wait until you shall know everything before proposing anything definitively, which may have been suggested by our Superiors in France. All depends on your first meeting; he told me so positively. These were his words: "All depends on your Mother; either confidence and simplicity must be restored, or separation will be necessary." I do not know of what nature he wishes it to be, I did not dare ask; but my constant prayer is that God will cause all things to tend to His glory. It is not in a letter that I can tell you all I have suffered on account of your relations with Monseigneur, which I never so well understood, or rather, which I did not know at all before your departure; I can realize now what you must have endured. . . . God will bless us by the prosperity and increase of our Academy; the building will soon be too small to contain the number of pupils; we shall have to add a wing. But we shall talk of all this when you come; soon, yes, soon, we shall be reunited, and I assure you that unless you send me away, I shall never leave you. I will remain with you for *your* penance and to prove the strong and sincere attachment of

Your submissive and affectionate daughter,

SISTER BASILIDE.

The closing lines of this letter were a great relief to Mother Theodore, who loved dear Sister Basilide and

appreciated her sterling virtues, even though she could not but blame her want of prudence on some occasions. The definitive separation from France was a harsh trial to the poor Sister, but she was reasonable, generous, and devoted, and knew how to make sacrifices for the Community's welfare. Her attachment to her Superior was never questioned thereafter, and Mother Theodore was always very careful to try to make her feel that she had lost nothing either of the esteem or the affection in which she had been held.

Sister St. Francis confirms Sister Basilide's views as expressed in the foregoing letter, adding:

Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary!

My good and beloved Mother, what shall I say to you? Nothing except that the time has come when we must be happy if we love to suffer. I shall not enter into details. I dare not write anything, I would almost say I dare not think anything scarcely, for I do not know whether my views are false or not. I think that I may say this much, however: do not come to any conclusion before you have seen us. There are many things to be judged of only after hearing of them. How I would wish to add to my pains those that you have to bear. I cannot resign myself to your multitude of contradictions; for my own I have more courage. It is unnecessary, I know, to repeat to you my ideas about Ruillé; they are just as they were when you left us; my opinion has not changed in your absence. I console myself that you have a support in the decisions that you have received. My poor Mother, how I pray for you! I dare not wish for anything for fear of following my own lights. I leave to God the fate of our beloved Congregation. We all pray for you and for our Sister M. Cecilia, whom we await anxiously. Her

letter from New Orleans shows that she has been worthy of her mission with you.

Continuing the Annals: "The wind which agitates the trees of our forest does not change more suddenly than our Bishop did. While we were yet beseeching Heaven to cure our Mother, and grieving over her prospective difficulties, we received some lines from her dated March 30, 1844, in which she said: 'I am writing to you in the very room of our good Bishop. He sends his blessing to you all. I shall be with you nearly as soon as my letter.'"

This happy change had been begun by the letter of Father Corbe; the frank and simple manner of Mother Theodore in explaining her conduct finished it. She proved to the Bishop that instead of trying to withdraw from his authority whilst in France, she cemented more strongly the bonds that united the two Congregations. The Bishop did not deny that he had acted badly towards her. He turned all his reproaches against Sister Basilide, and as much as he had praised her and extolled her before, so much did he seem now to condemn her. He declared that as long as she would belong to the Council he would take no part in the deliberations.

For about a month after Mother Theodore's return the Bishop could not find expressions strong enough to praise her. He humbled himself so much that she was more embarrassed than she had been by all his former reproaches. She left Vincennes greatly consoled by the interview and hopeful for better days. This made her arrival among her dear children on April 1st all the more joyous; and if her absence had called forth their

most fervent supplications for mercy and grace, her return evoked the most ardent thanksgivings to God, whose providence had been their refuge during that long year of trial and separation.

There was much consolation in all this, but how brief a respite from uneasiness! Again the Annals:

"Mother Theodore was firmly resolved to follow the Rules, above all that point which prescribes the visitation of the establishments, and to which the Bishop was most opposed. How could the spirit be maintained unless this were done? She went to Vincennes about the middle of May at the close of the ecclesiastical retreat to tell him she was convinced that neither she nor her sisters would have grace to follow a Constitution not approved by the Bishop of the diocese. She therefore begged him to make an extract of the Rules which he wished them to observe, adding that the professed Sisters would examine them, and if they did not think they were called by God to observe them, the Bishop should not find it wrong for them to go to another diocese that they might follow the original Rule, to the observance of which they had bound themselves by vow. She proposed to remain some months to help form the subjects whom the Bishop would admit to his new Congregation, if he should decide to form a new Community. The Bishop answered her that no one loved and respected our Rules more than he did; that she was very wicked to speak of leaving him, that she knew very well he had never found a woman like herself to put at the head of the Community. Still he persisted in exempting his missions, Vincennes and Saint-Peter's, from her supervision. The crisis came at the departure of two little

girls from Vincennes whom Mother Theodore secured for the Academy at St. Mary's. The Bishop wished boarders to be received at Vincennes, and the Sisters were not able to give them suitable accommodations. It did not occur to Mother Theodore that the matter was one for the Bishop to arrange. But learning of his displeasure she went to him to explain the motives of her action and express her regret. This did not reconcile him. He at once informed Father Corbe that he was to be the ecclesiastical Superior of the Sisters of Providence. Father Corbe notified Mother Theodore immediately of this appointment. Upon receiving the intelligence from him [the Bishop said nothing to her about it although she was in Vincennes at the time], Mother Theodore was sorely afflicted, not because she feared the Community would not find a father in their beloved almoner, but because she always preserved a most sincere regard for the Bishop, and she dreaded the consequences of such a rupture. She began to deplore in great anguish of soul her want of tact, as she in her humility called it, and her prayers and penances were redoubled at each new difficulty. Whenever anything unpleasant happened she was accustomed to say: 'It is because of my sins that God permits this affliction to our poor Congregation. My God, let me alone be the victim. Do not permit the consequences of my unworthiness to fall on the innocent, upon the dear children whom Thy providence has brought to these lands. Save our loved Community, and let not Thine anger be turned against us.' These hours of prayer brought to her soul, if not consolation and sweetness, at least—what was far more needful—light and

strength and peace. She besought the Bishop to continue in the capacity towards the Community which the Rule indicates. The Bishop himself sincerely wished to maintain his former relations, and seeing Mother Theodore's anxiety he thought the moment was opportune to renew the demands he had formerly made. But neither her affection nor her affliction superseded her judgment. She had not resisted through obstinacy, and she would not now yield through weakness. 'I will remain your Superior on one condition only,' the Bishop said; 'write and sign that all which you and your Sister have said against me in France is false. You have calumniated me; it is my right to exact a recantation.' Mother Theodore calmly replied that she regretted exceedingly not being able to accede to his demands, because he had not been calumniated. This ended all peace negotiations. Mother Theodore listened in perfect silence to the long repetition of complaints against her, which consisted mostly of suspicions and inferences. At its close she begged the Bishop's blessing. This deeply touched him, and he gave it most paternally, adding, 'I have been cruelly harsh to you; forget all and pray for the poor Bishop.' Mother Theodore did not venture further. She hoped now that the storm was over; but there was only a momentary lull, followed by a renewal of displeasure which a letter of recrimination disclosed, reaching her upon her arrival at St. Mary's."

Father Corbe was singularly prudent. He honored the Bishop, and if any one was capable of adjusting difficulties it was he. The Bishop on his part respected Father Corbe; he considered him his best friend; but even his best friends could not escape his displeasure.

Up to this time the buildings erected at St. Mary's had been at the Bishop's expense, which must be understood, however, not as a diocesan debt, for all the funds had been furnished by the charitable associations of France, especially appropriated and specified for the Sisters, and by private donations. As it was expressly stated what amounts were intended by the donors for St. Mary's, the disbursement was regarded as a gift to the Sisterhood, not to the diocese. Mr. Picquet, residing some miles distant in Illinois, knew that his brother of Alsace had donated a considerable sum to the Bishop of Vincennes for the establishment of a religious Congregation of women in his diocese. Members of the family testified to this fact on various occasions after learning that the Sisters of Providence had not come into possession of the property at St. Mary's. Undoubtedly the Bishop understood this, as well as his contract with Ruillé to give the Sisters their home; but he did not express his intentions on the subject. During the first year there was no income from any source, and the second year the amount that the boarders brought in was not sufficient to support the house. The Bishop then met all expenses, and certainly did well in that respect, considering all the other demands that were made upon him.

Now it happened that Father Corbe, acting in the capacity of Superior, gave permission for a balustrade to be placed around the porch to prevent the children when at play from falling off. As usual he sent the bill to the Bishop. It was promptly returned. This was a new predicament, and it suggested to the authorities at St. Mary's the expediency of obtaining title to the

land, which was theirs by right, and meeting their own expenses in the future. A petition to this effect set the Bishop at variance with Father Corbe and reopened hostilities with the Community. He declined being present at the retreat, and renewed his demand for a *recantation*. The Sisters having nothing to retract, there was no further communication until the Bishop returned to St. Mary's in November of the same year [1844] to bless the village church. At this visit he renewed his demand. Sister St. Francis was the one in particular from whom he required a *recantation*. Mother Theodore, always conciliatory, assured him that Sister St. Francis would do all she could to please him. Sister St. Francis was peace-loving and humble, but she was equally firm and uncompromising. Her final word was: "It is to buy pardon at too dear a price if it must be bought by an untruth."

There are many times undoubtedly when charity will not warrant the revealing of facts; but this rule does not hold when the person seeks advice from the proper authorities. Sister St. Francis could not think she had done wrong in communicating what she did to her Superiors at Ruillé and to the Bishop of Mans. When she made this observation to Bishop de la Hailandière he replied that the Superiors of Ruillé were no longer the Superiors of the Sisters at St. Mary's, nor had the Bishop of Mans any right to give advice. To this statement Mother Theodore replied that until he [Bishop de la Hailandière] would deign to give his approval to their Rules, or give them others, and inasmuch as Rome had not yet affixed its seal to their Rules, they must consider themselves as belonging to the Bishop of Mans.

They had repeatedly entreated the Bishop to approve their Rules, or if he could not, to advise them of the changes that must be made, which they would consider and adopt, if the spirit of the Rule would not be altered. It was now a very deep sorrow to Mother Theodore to find that all her efforts were in vain, but Sister St. Francis tells us "she concealed her affliction admirably, and to the anxieties of the Sisters she opposed cheerfulness and hope." "Let us pray more, my dear Sisters," she would say, "and rest quiet in the providence of the Sacred Heart. Can we think our good God will abandon us? Not as long as we cling to Him. So, courage! hope and pray."

The number of pupils continuing to increase, it became necessary to enlarge the Academy; but as the Community was not in legal possession of the property, it was considered imprudent to build on land that might be taken from them at any time. Application was therefore made to the Indiana legislature for an act of incorporation [which act the Bishop maintained was necessary, a prerequisite to the Sisters holding legal possession of property]. A charter of the most commendable nature was granted in January, 1846, which placed St.-Mary-of-the-Woods on a basis with the first-class colleges of the country, and which removed any disabilities that might have been considered legal impediments to the free action of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence.

Another severe illness reduced Mother Theodore to the last extremity, and again the Community were prostrate with grief. Their only hope was in prayer, and in this respect they were not negligent, as one of them

said: "Our Mother's frequent illnesses keep us fervent." One night while still very apprehensive for their patient, who was scarcely past the danger-point, they were suddenly startled by an alarm of fire. The porch adjoining the kitchen was ablaze. Though the flames were penetrating into the house, they were arrested by the heroic efforts of the Sisters and the workmen.

The fright brought on a return of fever to the foundress. Her condition became alarming, so that it was considered best to administer the last sacraments. This time, as formerly, the Holy Viaticum had the restorative effect; she began to recover, but not before the most fervent promises and sacrifices had been made. Some burned their precious letters, thus to implore the favor of Almighty God; had they anything else to sacrifice they would have laid it on the altar. Their austerities, to say the least, were highly indiscreet, *for love often knoweth no measure, but grows fervent beyond all measure;*[1] and well they remembered our blessed Lord's injunction to put on sackcloth and ashes, and in fasting and weeping to seek aid from the Most High. Mother Theodore's convalescence was extremely slow; during forty days she could take only a few drops at a time of milk or very light broth. But, finally, with her recovery new spiritual life seemed to be infused. Courage and zeal grew with every new difficulty and prospect. God's blessing was evidently in the shadow of the cross.

We have now come to the date when Bishop de la Hailandière returned from Rome, June, 1845. Gregory

[1] Following of Christ, Book III, Chap. 8.

XVI. had given him proofs of his esteem and did not accept his resignation, which it was said he proffered. At Mans the Bishop was graciously received by Bishop Bouvier, who discussed matters freely, though kindly, and Bishop de la Hailandière seemed well satisfied. Father Corbe went to Vincennes to await the Bishop's arrival, which kind attention pleased him greatly. On returning to St. Mary's the Rev. Superior told Mother Theodore that he believed the Bishop would be pleased to see her, whereupon she went immediately, and met with a very gracious reception. She returned to St. Mary's enriched with relics, among which was the entire body of St. Urban.

This visit was not an unmixed joy, for Mother Theodore then learned that Bishop Bouvier had sanctioned all Bishop de la Hailandière's proceedings, and condemned the Sisters as in a state of rebellion. This did not disconcert her, however, as she had just received a most paternal letter from Bishop Bouvier, giving full details of the interview and confirming all the ideas he had hitherto entertained in regard to the Indiana foundation. But this was not the propitious moment to produce it. It was only when some things of serious import were said to the other Sisters that a copy of Bishop Bouvier's letter was sent to the Bishop of Vincennes.

The term for which Mother Theodore had been elected—if the proceedings related in Chapter XXI could be called an election—was approaching its close. Feeling that a new election would be required, the Sister Councillors sought advice again from the Superiors in France. Not to involve Mother Theodore in a new embarrassment, they wrote without her knowledge to

Bishop Bouvier, who replied in his kindness and wisdom, telling them that he did not anticipate the deposition of their Mother, as he had made the subject very clear to Bishop de la Hailandière, who acquiesced in perfect graciousness to the previous choice. The Sisters requested the Bishop to send his reply to Father Deydier, pastor at Evansville, through whom they would receive it. In this respect he also complied with their wishes, and further wrote to Father Deydier the following:

LAVAL, Oct. 4, 1845.

When the Bishop of Vincennes asked us for Sisters of Providence of Ruillé to establish them in his diocese, he apparently was disposed to accept all the conditions, all that we desired to impose. We imposed none, but told him that the foundation in question would be too far from Ruillé to be subject to the central government of the Congregation. From that moment I have not performed one act of jurisdiction in regard to the Sisters in question. The counsels that I have given them are all in favor of my colleague of Vincennes, in favor of his legitimate and well-understood authority. But I could not excuse myself from saying that the Sisters who left Ruillé would have the right to return in case they could not remain at Vincennes; this is a general rule. In this sense I was obliged to write to the good Sisters who consulted me, because I owe them the truth. As for the rest, I shall always recommend to them submission in all that appertains to the Bishop's rights and profound respect for his sacred character.

Before separating after the retreat of 1845 Mother Theodore asked the Council whether they would consent to have the Constitutions changed and to adopt the kind of government the Bishop had in view. Knowing

by experience that his ideas were variable and generally opposed to the Constitutions in the most essential points, they answered in the negative. They then agreed upon writing a letter signed by all, but which would be presented only in case of urgent need. The letter was a petition to the Bishop to approve their Rules and Constitutions, and, in case of his refusal, a declaration to the effect that they would seek an asylum elsewhere. The memorial was signed by all the Councillors—Sister St. Vincent Ferrer, Sister Mary Joseph [Parveillan], Sister Mary Cecilia, Sister Augustine, Sister St. Francis Xavier, and Sister Mary Liguori. This letter was not presented until December of the same year, at which time Mother Theodore wrote to the Mission Sisters:

Christmas Eve finds my heart throbbing with pain and anxiety; yet, as I think of you all, my dear Sisters, and behold your faithfulness in the observance of our Rule, your generosity, your devotedness to the Congregation for whose existence we are struggling, a ray of joy pierces the gloom and makes me happy, even to-night, after having received the saddest tidings a few hours ago.

When we go in spirit to Bethlehem with Mary and Joseph the way cannot be desolate; and when there in the hard, cold manger we find the REDEEMER of the world we forget our sorrows, our miseries, our trials, in the joy of beholding our infant Saviour, the Prince of peace. Pray, my Sisters, O pray that the grace of this holy season may inflame our hearts, and that both within and without we may enjoy peace. We are in great suffering here at home. I need not say more, for your prayers will not be wanting. In prayer alone is our hope.

A new sorrow afflicted the Community at St. Mary's the following month, when Father Corbe received a

letter discharging him from his office of Ecclesiastical Superior of the Sisters of Providence and summoning him to Vincennes. He went at once, from which place he wrote to Mother Theodore:

Must I rejoice or regret having come to Vincennes? Truly I do not know. I went to see good Father Timon [1] and related to him in general the cause of our difficulties. He listened very kindly, and his decision was that we should endeavor to come to an agreement. From what I told him of the institution and its prosperity, he does not doubt at all but that the will of God is that you should remain where you are; "only there are some obstacles to this holy will which," said he, "you must strive to remove by your prayers and communions." He is of opinion that these difficulties will only be passing ones. He is a conciliatory man and counsels peace as much as possible. He admits that an understanding is extremely difficult, but he

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[1] Rt. Rev. John Timon, D.D., C.M., was born in 1797, at Conewago, Adams Co., Pa. In his twenty-sixth year he entered the preparatory seminary at the Barrens, Mo., in 1823.

After a successful and even brilliant course of two years he was elevated to the priesthood, and became a member of the Congregation of the Missions. In 1835 Rev. Dr. Timon was appointed Visitor, or Provincial, of the Congregation in the United States. In 1840 he was appointed Prefect Apostolic of Texas, with the power to administer confirmation. In 1847 he was handed the documents from Rome which appointed him to the See of Buffalo, then a newly erected diocese. He died in the Holy Week of 1867.

Bishop Timon was in the highest sense of the word an apostolic man—simple, humble, charitable, learned, filled with the spirit of God. . . . In the language of Father Smarius, S.J., Dr. Timon was a "blessed man whose memory shall live for generations among the people whom his zeal converted, or whom the example of his rare virtues led to justice and holiness of life." (See History of the Catholic Church in America, J. O'K. Murray.)

thinks it possible; therefore it must be tried; or, at least, wait another month before coming to a decision. . . .

I have had a third interview with the Bishop, in which, after much debating, he appeared willing to come to an agreement. His conditions were greatly modified; but at present is it the same? I fear not. Your dream, my dear Mother, has been very nearly realized. We have yet three days to be together; what will happen? I do not know; however, I am almost certain that I shall return to you. The Bishop regrets having written me that letter, and wishes that I should return as Superior or not at all. . . .

Now, what is to be done? It would be well to write to the Bishop of Detroit. You might tell him that I am at Vincennes; that I am going to take for you a definitive resolution which will be sent to him two or three weeks after the Council of Baltimore; that you think it will be for the departure of the Community. Beg of his Lordship not to let the Bishop of Vincennes know of this communication until further authorized, as it is very important for you and for me that he should not be informed just yet of our proceedings whether we go or stay in his diocese. Courage! and hope until the end. God will keep account of these pains and miseries.

In accordance with Father Corbe's advice Mother Theodore wrote to Bishop Lefèvre, Bishop of Detroit, from whom she received a favorable reply. Bishop Lefèvre wrote at the same time to Father Corbe that Detroit would gladly receive the Community of St. Mary's, provided he would remain its Superior. This dissuaded the good Father from going to Saint-Louis, into which diocese he had sought and obtained admission.

Mother Theodore's next communication with the es-

teemed prelate of Detroit bears the date December 18, 1845.

Before taking the liberty of writing to you again about the important affairs with which we are engaged, we wished to consult our Superiors in France—the Bishop of Mans and our Reverend Mother—to beg their permission to withdraw from Indiana. This permission has been granted. We desired, moreover, to communicate with the Bishop of Vincennes, which we have done. Although our affairs are not entirely terminated, the nature of our relations leaves scarcely any doubt but that we shall leave St. Mary's very soon. Persuaded of this we have cast our eyes upon your diocese, drawn by the thought that there, owing to your zeal and prudence, we could fulfil more perfectly the end of our holy vocation, which being that of charity and devotedness especially to the education of youth, would find wider scope for exercising these virtues than in a diocese in the East, where we have been invited to locate.

We beg to know whether your Lordship is still disposed to bestow upon us shelter and protection, and on what conditions. The first of those we would propose is that your Lordship would deign to approve our Rules and Constitutions. An experience of five years has proved that, with some slight exceptions, they can be observed here as in France. However, if after having examined them you should judge in your wisdom that some points would be observed with difficulty in your diocese, we beg of you to point them out to us, that we may see whether it would be possible for us to admit the changes without altering the spirit of our institute. I think I may safely say in advance the Sisters are disposed to do all in their power that good may be done, provided that our Constitutions be not altered in any essential particular. As the

other conditions refer to material things, we simply ask what you will be able to do for us.

The preference of the Sisters, we see, was to remain in the West, although an asylum awaited them in the East, Bishop Hughes of New York having invited the Community to settle in Brooklyn and there assume charge of a hospital. In the South, Bishop Martin, of Natchitoches, formerly Vicar General of Vincennes, would give them a hearty welcome, and Bishop Blanc, of New Orleans, signified his willingness to admit them to his diocese. The State of Texas was also proposed to them as a place of refuge.

It seemed to the Sisters that there was no way of ending the conflict they had sustained for nearly six years than by leaving the diocese; yet it would break their hearts to do so. They loved their forest home, and there was besides the fear of opposing the designs of God, who, many felt, had destined them for St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Above all, there were the awful threats and denunciations of the Bishop of Vincennes which their alleged state of rebellion brought upon them; threats of excommunication should they leave, of deprivation of the sacraments should they remain and continue in the observance of their Rules and Constitutions.

## CHAPTER XXV.

MEASURES OF COMPROMISE ADOPTED.—THEIR FAILURE.—MOTHER THEODORE IS EXCOMMUNICATED AND DISMISSED FROM THE CONGREGATION.—APPEAL TO ARCHBISHOP ECCLESTON, OF BALTIMORE.—BISHOP DE LA HAILANDIÈRE RESIGNS.

"HAIL crosses, great and small, spiritual and temporal, interior and exterior, hail! I kiss your feet, unworthy as I am of your very shadow." (Mother Theodore's diary.)

As our divine Redeemer crowned His life of humiliation with the ignominy of crucifixion, in which appeared His excess of love, so it was on the heights of humiliation and suffering to which the holy foundress had climbed that the flame of love broke forth, and a humility obtained that made her deem herself unworthy of even the shadow of the cross. "Crosses great and small, spiritual and temporal, interior and exterior" had been her portion. Rendered like her divine Model, she deserved to find the heavenly peace to which there is no other way than the royal road of the cross. "In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit;"[1] therefore could she say, "I kiss your feet, unworthy as I am

[1] Following of Christ, Book II. 12.

of your very shadow." It was this blessed grace that sustained her in the conflict. The intense anxiety she had endured for the past five years was enough to shatter forever a much stronger nervous system, especially in one of so ardent, tender, and affectionate a nature as she possessed. Her heart was, as it were, bleeding all the time. It is true the sweet providence of God did not leave her bereft of all comfort. In her intimate communings with the divine Spouse who was her portion forever, she experienced consolations that made her countenance beam. Sometimes she would communicate her joy by telling her thoughts in all simplicity to her Sisters; but generally she would only smile and leave them guessing at her secret. Then the devotedness and sympathy of her spiritual daughters was something to which no maternal heart could be insensible, and they were so fervent in perfecting themselves in the virtues of a good Religious that she could not but be consoled. Mother Theodore herself describes them to us in a letter written to Bishop Bouvier:

The afflictions affecting our Community have produced very precious fruits; besides an admirable union which exists between persons of different nations, of dispositions so opposite, some well informed, others without education, there is also a great spirit of faith and piety, and a confidence in God that goes as far, I believe, as it can go. If you could see with what simplicity and perseverance they ask of God all that they wish to obtain! I assure you they know how to pray; indeed, I do not think they have ever asked for anything which they have not obtained. Thus all things work together unto good to them that love God.

The time was now approaching for the seventh Council of Baltimore. The Bishop set out to attend it, but before starting he renewed his demand for a letter of *recantation* to present to the Bishops, promising to give the Sisters the property as soon as they should comply. Tired of the warfare, Mother Theodore urged the Sisters and the Rev. Superior to accede in a measure; at least to consent to the election of a Superior General. This, she thought, would end the controversy, as she believed herself to be the cause of all the trouble. The Sisters, fearing that they would be denounced before the Council should they refuse, wrote to the Bishop in terms of great respect, expressing their sorrow and regret for having been the cause of so much displeasure to him, and repenting of any fault they may have committed in his regard. They declared their willingness to consent to the election of a Superior General, supposing, of course, that their Mother could be a candidate, as she had not reached the limit the Rule prescribed.

This act was couched in the most humble and respectful terms, but there was no compromise; the conditions were clearly stated; neither was there any recantation. The Archbishop of Baltimore understood it perfectly, though he considered it wiser to withhold his opinion at the time. Negotiations with the Bishop of Detroit were thus temporarily suspended. A long delay, consequent upon Bishop Lefèvre's absence from his episcopal city, by which the Sisters were not assured of his good-will in their regard, decided them, with the other reasons mentioned, to adopt the above course of action.

Writing to Father Corbe from Baltimore, May 15, 1846, Bishop de la Hailandière says:

I was anxious, dear Rev. Friend, to receive your letter, for to-morrow we shall conclude our deliberations; the submission of the Sisters has therefore come in time. But there would have been more merit in the eyes of men had there been less delay in forwarding it; had it arrived before the pretended Vicar General of the Eudists was obliged to retire, covered with shame; before the intrigues of Father Martin had been discovered; before a judgment had been formed about the Bishop of Mans; before so much esteem, affection, and respect had been shown me by the Fathers of the Council; nevertheless, such as it is, I accept it if it be sincere.

I engage myself from this moment to give the property at St. Mary's to the Sisters, to be sure with some conditions. I also engage myself to approve their Constitutions publicly and by writing, on condition, however, of the change of name of persons,[1] and that a new edition be made in English. If some points need changing, a committee will see to it, and the changes submitted to the approval of the Sisters. They may now build without fear, following the plans I have adopted for them.

This was so satisfactory that the Sisters concluded to remain at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

There seems to have been some mistake in the statements contained in the above letter concerning the Superior of the Eudists, the former Vicar General of the diocese, and the Bishop of Mans. Although "ignominiously expelled" from the diocese, Father Bellier only left his house at Vincennes to be installed at the College of Mobile in capacity of Superior; the "intrigues" of Father Martin consisted of an effort to place

[1] The authorities of Vincennes to be substituted for the authorities in France.

the difficulties of the Vincennes diocese before the Council of Baltimore. Whether his endeavors were successful we cannot ascertain; he departed for Rome at once, prior to the Council of Baltimore, and was named Bishop of Natchitoches. As to Bishop Bouvier, the "judgment formed" was entirely in his favor, as we shall see in the later correspondence of Archbishop Eccleston.

July 3d Mother Theodore announced to Father Martin, who had volunteered to plead her cause in Baltimore, in France, and in Rome, what they had done, and what their condescension had obtained. Father Martin expresses his views of the matter in a letter to Bishop Bouvier, addressed from Rennes, September 20, 1846:

Since my journey to Mans, where I had the honor of seeing you, I have received a letter from Mother Theodore dated July 3d. The sum of the news is that, tired of the warfare, the Sisters of the Council have at last consented to sign an act of reparation. The signing of this act was exacted by his Lordship previous to any concession on his part, and he had given to the Ecclesiastical Superior, Rev. J. Corbe, his word as a Bishop that as soon as it should be signed he would approve the Constitutions and give the property of St. Mary's to the Sisters. This *act* was in the hands of the Bishop May 15th; on his side nothing had yet been done up to July 3d. I dare not blame these poor Sisters; they have yielded to a moral torture; but, first of all, there is no uprightness in that; and, in the second place, they have furnished arms against themselves for a future attack. His Lordship has openly declared his will that not only should Mother Theodore not be the Superior, but that she must leave the Congregation. She expects to return to France after the retreat.

If she should do so, I do not give a year of existence to the Community. . . . It seems that his Lordship has also declared that he is going to dismiss every priest belonging to M. Moreau (the Holy Cross Congregation at South Bend).

I shall be in Louisiana, God willing, the beginning of December. If things come to the point that Mother Theodore will have to leave Indiana I shall do all in my power that God may open a door to her zeal in the South; it was arranged with Bishop Blanc last April, when a very advantageous offer was made to her. . . .

Bishop de la Hailandière's letter to Father Corbe restored hope, but the promise was slow in its fulfilment. After delaying some time Mother Theodore again addressed her wise counsellor, Bishop Bouvier:

July 21, 1846.

I should have been pleased [she says] to write sooner, and to console your paternal heart, which has suffered so much for your daughters of the forest. I should also have desired to tell you that all was settled, that the Congregation you have protected with so much benevolence is at last founded in Indiana. If it does not please our good God to grant me this consolation, He permits me to hope that we shall soon have it; much is already done. No doubt our good Mother Mary has informed you of the news that I communicated to her, in sending the copy of a letter which Bishop de la Hailandière sent to our Rev. Superior. His Lordship promised to approve our Rules and to give us the deed of the land; he granted everything we asked for, so that we were very happy indeed, all the more as he had told Father Corbe that he never would approve the Rules. We are all convinced that this change of mind is due to what was said to him by the Archbishop

of Baltimore, to whom you had the kindness to write. The serenity will not be without clouds, I feel convinced; but I know that nothing will happen that God does not permit. He has protected us with so much love until the present that I should consider it a crime to doubt of His mercy now. It matters little who governs, it seems to me, provided the Rule is followed. I should be too happy if my task were accomplished and I were allowed to retire, to think only of myself and prepare for death, which I believe is not far off. I will desire nothing, however, but the fulfilment of the divine will.

On the 14th instant his Lordship brought us the deed for a portion of the land at St. Mary's, about eighty or ninety acres; the remainder he reserved. The contract contains some conditions which our Sisters dislike very much; for example, that we shall not be permitted to do the least thing on this land without the approbation of his Lordship or his heirs, etc. As the law in this country admits of no condition, it is very probable that the contract will not be valid. A lawyer has it under examination. I am so weary of speaking and treating of business matters with his Lordship. We are translating our Rules into English, introducing the slight changes agreed upon long ago in regard to the endowment of establishments and other minor points. When they shall have received the approbation of the Ordinary we shall have them printed. . . . It was not possible to delay building any longer. . . . We have now forty-six pupils in our Academy. Although all do not pay, we have been able to lay aside something this year. This Academy is our only resource to meet the expenses of the Rev. Superior's house, the novitiate, the establishments, the orphans, five in number, and the Academy itself. . . . A great deal of good is being done in our houses; we were very much consoled in visiting them this year. After the

retreat we shall make a new foundation at Fort Wayne. There they will give us a brick house and a small meadow; the rest will have to be at our own expense. Fortunately we do not require much furniture.

Finding that the contract was void, a period of delay ensued which was unfortunate in the extreme, as the building of an extension to the Academy had been commenced. But under Father Timon's encouragement it was pushed to completion. He assured the Sisters that a change would have to take place soon, that they must persevere and all would turn out well.

We now read in Mother Theodore's journal:

August 5th. The examinations of our pupils begin; Judge Huntington is the examiner. The Rt. Rev. Bishop, the Very Rev. Superior [Father Corbe], Rev. George Hamilton, of Chicago, and Rev. S. Lalumière, of Terre Haute, attend. Upwards of three hundred visitors are present at the close. Judge Huntington has delivered a very fine discourse. Sweet Providence, we bless Thee for all Thy tender mercies!

The large concourse of people on this occasion testified to the interest taken by the public in the institution at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Outwardly there was everything to encourage the Community. The number of pupils was always increasing; new subjects for the novitiate were coming in rapidly, and it was evident much good was being done at St. Mary's and at the houses in the different towns where the Sisters had opened schools.

After the closing exercises the Bishop sought opportunity to ask the Councillors when they would hold the

elections. Sister Mary Cecilia replied that our Rules were not yet approved, whereupon the Bishop refused to be present at the annual retreat, which was to begin the next day under the direction of Rev. George Hamilton. The latter's advice to the Sisters, relative to their difficulties, was substantially the same as that which had been given by other ecclesiastics of deep learning and piety. He was of very great service to the distressed Councillors at that critical moment, and he ever after continued warmly interested in the struggling Community. No election was held. The vows of five novices were received by Father Corbe and the habit given to three postulants.

Several months later, finding it impossible for the Sisters to remain at Saint-Peter's, Mother Theodore wrote to the Bishop informing him of the circumstances and asking permission to withdraw the Sisters. The Bishop wrote to Father Corbe that he would transact no business with one who was no longer the Superior General. Father Corbe then decided the question himself and recalled the Sisters.

The Congregation was now on the point of losing another of its establishments, though the Sisters only learned of it when the Superior of another Community wrote to know how soon they intended leaving Vincennes, as she had been asked by Bishop de la Hailandière to give him some Sisters from her Community to replace the Sisters of Providence. This intelligence surprised and afflicted Mother Theodore, for the Sisters were beginning to see the results of their labors in Vincennes; further, if they were dismissed from the episcopal city, was it not to be understood that some-

thing of more serious consequence must soon follow?

Mother Theodore spent the following night before the Blessed Sacrament. Sister St. Francis remained some hours with her; then Mother Theodore bade her retire. There alone, in the solitude of the night, the grieving Superior poured forth her soul in indescribable anguish; there, too, she found strength and light and joy that made her countenance so radiant at the moment of holy communion the next morning, as to attract Father Corbe's attention. When he asked her during the day what made her so happy, she smilingly answered in the words of à Kempis: "In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness."

Whatever may have been the Bishop's intentions, he said nothing about the Sisters leaving Vincennes. The classes were opened that year at the usual time; no change took place, and the Sisters did not divulge the secret they had discovered.

Mother Theodore began her annual visitation to the missions—Madison, Jasper, Fort Wayne, and Terre Haute; Vincennes was reserved for the last. Of this visit the Annals tell us:

> The saddest presentiments filled the heart of our Mother in going to Vincennes. She had learned at Louisville from the Rt. Rev. Bishop Chabrat [Coadjutor] that Bishop de la Hailandière had offered his resignation in a manner not to be accepted. In fear and trembling we were praying to God for our Mother, when a letter came from her telling us that we might send the conveyance for her, as she was going to take the coach for Terre Haute the next day without having seen the Bishop.

The day appointed we saw the carriage coming. "There is Mother," exclaimed Sister Olympiade. "Let us go to the chapel and thank God." We did so, then hastened to meet Mother. The carriage was empty. Sister Mary Xavier was walking slowly and sorrowfully over the bridge. "Where is Mother?" we asked. "Where is Mother?" Sister Mary Xavier pressed the hand of Sister St. Francis; it was some time before she could speak. At last she said, "O mon Dieu! she could not come; the Bishop has excommunicated her and expelled her from the Congregation, and forbidden her to come back to St. Mary's."

The date of this unhappy incident was May 20, 1847.

This culminating act of severity was occasioned by the fact that Mother Theodore had paid a visit to the establishment at Vincennes, which house, the Bishop thought, stood in no need of the Superior General's inspection. On the point of visiting the houses belonging to the Congregation Mother Theodore was inflexible. How could the spirit be maintained, if from time to time they were not visited by the Superiors? The Sisters themselves were unwilling to be sent to missions over which their Mother Superior was not supposed to have jurisdiction.

On the 19th of May Father Corbe wrote to Mother Theodore, then at Vincennes. We quote in part:

Your letter seemed to be so sad. No doubt you were sick, or else you feared the storm. However that may be, if the thunderbolt leaves you with one cent's worth of life, come back to us; and no matter with what anathemas you may be charged, we will receive you with joy. God, I trust, will help you. Despite my confidence in the divine mercy, my soul is sad: it is truly tired of this sort

of warfare; no respite, no peace, and such a feeble hope for the future. Truly at present we can chant the *De Profundis*. Well! I trust that God will let us go to the depths of misery only to prove His goodness the more, and to let us know that only *in* Him and *by* Him can we accomplish His work.

This was followed in a few days by a letter written probably after Sister Mary Xavier's return and her recital of what had transpired at Vincennes. Father Corbe says:

My good Mother, I wished very much to see you again, but you would not return. What prevented you, since the Bishop had released you from all your vows? You could therefore consider yourself as the common faithful free to go where you pleased. I desire to see you again, if possible, and, if your health will permit, could you not take the stage on Monday? Or, if that be impossible, tell Jean to write where you will go, then the Sisters will join you there. They are now in the deepest sorrow; they indeed excite compassion. They will pray for you. Pray much to the Blessed Virgin; she will bring you back to us; and rely on the invariable affection and prayers of

Your very humble and obedient servant,

J. CORBE.

Information of Mother Theodore's dismissal was sent by the Councillors to Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore, also to Rev. M. de St. Palais, the Vicar General of Vincennes, and to the Superiors in France, with the further intimation that the Sisters were making hasty preparations to leave Indiana; for if Mother Theodore were forced to leave, they would all follow her. The Rev. Superior and the workmen had arranged to accom-

pany them. A memorial to this effect was prepared to be transmitted to the Bishop of Vincennes by the Sisters at St. Mary's; another by the novices and postulants, all of whom testified their determination to follow the Community whithersoever it would go, although Sister St. Francis placed before them the probable consequences of their act should they leave, and the possible results of their acquiescence should they remain—in the former case, denunciations and hardships; in the latter, the Bishop's favor, peace, and prosperity. But in separating they would not be Sisters of Providence. These memorials were taken by Sister M. Cecilia and Sister Olympiade, who went to Vincennes to console Mother Theodore, and to help care for her. The distressed Superior was much pleased with their kindness and attachment. She marvelled at their courage, but counselled them to tone down their "resolutions." While at Vincennes the reply of Archbishop Eccleston was received, which follows here in full:

BALTIMORE, June 18, 1847.

To Sister St. Francis Xavier:

I have read your letter with the most painful interest, and had heard from other sources that your position is painful in the extreme. Be assured that I am not insensible to your trials; but situated as I am, I cannot with consistency and propriety take an active part in your affairs. Should I even attempt it I would but aggravate your troubles, and I have in such matters no jurisdiction out of my diocese. I feel, however, no hesitation in encouraging you to be guided by the estimable Bishop Bouvier [of Mans], whom I venerate as one of the most holy and learned prelates in Europe. Of course, I address myself

on this point only to the Sisters who came from his diocese or were under his charge.

May the God of peace and all consolation be with you and enable you to bear your cross with humility, obedience, and resignation.

✝ SAMUEL, Abp. Bal.

After the interview with Bishop de la Hailandière on May 20th, it seemed that Mother Theodore could bear no more. The sentence pronounced against her, of expulsion from her Congregation and of excommunication as a rebellious subject, brought on a severe illness. The Sisters at Vincennes were overwhelmed with grief, seeing their Mother in this pitiable condition. In spite of their tenderest cares her fever increased. Having asked for a confessor she was given her choice between a young priest only a few days ordained and the Bishop himself. She begged for another. Her request was refused. This left her bereft of all consolation and the spiritual succor her soul needed in this the darkest hour of her life. The two Sisters who went from St. Mary's to stay with Mother Theodore succeeded in getting a letter off to Father Corbe, telling him of Mother Theodore's mental distress, of her serious illness, and of her great desire to see him. It was three weeks since she had been denied an interview with the Vicar General or any one with whom she wished to speak. Father Corbe no sooner received the message than he set out for Vincennes, and, though he arrived at night, he administered the sacraments and returned without any one but the Sisters knowing of his visit. Mother Theodore's mind being now at peace, with the

very kind attentions of Dr. Batty, she rapidly recovered, to the relief and great joy of the Sisters.

All intercourse with the Bishop terminated with the excommunication of Mother Theodore. Whether Father Corbe's visit became known is uncertain; but suddenly, and without apparent reason, he was summoned to Vincennes, deprived of his office of ecclesiastical Superior—it was the fourth time in four years—and dismissed from the diocese. While on his way to Vincennes, he learned at Terre Haute by a telegram from Father Bellier, in Mobile, that Bishop Bazin had been appointed to the See of Vincennes. Not knowing whether Bishop de la Hailandière had received the Papal brief or not, Father Corbe did not tell the news to any one, nor did he say anything to the Bishop that would give him an idea of what he intended to do. But he determined to await the arrival of the new Bishop before taking any action, and returned to St. Mary's the same night.

The following morning as the Sisters were leaving the church after Mass, the Bishop said to Sister St. Vincent, who was Superior of the house at Vincennes: "You will be pleased to know that you have a new Bishop. I have just written to Father Corbe that I leave you in his hands till my successor arrives."

One day later Mother Theodore was in the midst of her Community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

The Vicar General, Rev. Maurice de St. Palais, wrote to Mother Theodore in the following terms:

MADISON, June 29, 1847.

Allow me to tell you the share I took in your afflictions and the joy I felt in learning of your return to St.-Mary-of-

the-Woods. In case of the contrary I saw as a thing inevitable the dissolution of your Community of the Sisters of Providence; and, besides the loss that my Congregation would sustain, I dreaded the scandal that would necessarily follow. Poor Bishop! how unhappy he renders himself with the best intentions in the world!

At the time that you were detained at Vincennes by illness and on the point of leaving Indiana a severe correspondence was going on between the Bishop and myself, and I was, and still am, like yourself, the object of his displeasure. But his last letter contained only reproaches for ingratitude, mingled with a sentiment of affection. He now announces to me that his position will soon place him out of the way of being disagreeable to us. Whatever that may mean, I shall continue to be devoted to him, and I only regret that he has not known who are the persons in his diocese that loved him sincerely. I trust that the peace which has been restored to you will continue.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

VINCENNES' NEW BISHOP.—BISHOP BAZIN CONSECRATED.—LETTERS OF BISHOP BAZIN TO MOTHER THEODORE.—BISHOP BAZIN AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.—DEATH OF BISHOP BAZIN.—BISHOP DE ST. PALAIS.

Bishop Bazin was a native of France. Coming to America as a young ecclesiastic, he was received into the diocese of Mobile, and was its Vicar General at the time of his elevation to the episcopacy. His consecration took place in the cathedral at Vincennes, on the twenty-fourth of October, Feast of the Archangel Raphael.

His reputation for indefatigable industry, no less than for piety and administrative ability, preceded his arrival. Great hopes were cherished by all, clergy and laity alike. One who was present at the consecration ceremonies thus concludes her description of the scene: "Bishop Bazin addressed a few words to the people after vespers, it being Sunday. Although they were much less eloquent than those of Bishop Purcell in the morning, they were received with far more avidity. He began his discourse in tears and ended it in tears. He told the people that it was for their sake that he left his dear diocese in the South and his beloved Bishop, Rt. Rev. T. Portier, who had

been as a father to him. He promised them to be all theirs. 'Yes, my dear children,' he added, 'if you are sick, if you are afflicted, if you suffer send for me by day or by night; fear not to disturb me, for I have to-day consecrated myself entirely to your welfare. My hair is gray, but I am still vigorous. I will love you as I have loved my spiritual children in Mobile.' Then he addressed some paternal words to the clergy. Everybody wept. It was so long since a heart had spoken to the hearts of these poor people of Vincennes."

An attack of inflammation of the lungs prevented Mother Theodore from attending the consecration. She was again reduced to the last extremity; but as the faith of her daughters was greater than their natural hope, their prayers again obtained her restoration to health.

The relics of St. Urban were carried this time in procession. As her cure was solicited through the intercession of St. Urban, this saint has ever since claimed a special veneration in the Community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

It was a very sweet comfort for the anxious Superior General to receive some expression of the new Bishop's friendly sentiments. On the day of his arrival he had received most cordially the Sisters of Vincennes, who called to greet him. The same graciousness, however, did not manifest itself a few days later when Father Corbe went to make his visit of welcome. There was a noticeable reserve. This may have been due to the letters left him by his predecessor, who drew up a statement of all his grievances against the Sisters of Providence and their ecclesiastical Superior. Fortunately Father

Deydier had travelled a long distance with the Bishop-elect and informed him how matters were at St. Mary's. This served to counteract in a measure the effect of Bishop de la Hailandière's statements, yet there were some doubts in the new Bishop's mind.

We shall now take pleasure in presenting the first letter of Bishop Bazin to Mother Theodore:

VINCENNES, October 28, 1847.

GOOD AND RESPECTED MOTHER:

Only a few words in haste, for I am still overburdened with pressing duties. I am much pained to learn that you are so seriously indisposed, and hope that when this letter will have reached you, your restoration to health will be at least nearly completed.

I was moved even to tears in reading your good letter. Bury the past in oblivion, or think of it only to bless the providence of God who sent you crosses because He loved you. God never fails to test His true children.

Rev. M. Corbe and your *méchante* Sister St. Francis Xavier have informed me of your difficulties. The future is yours. I shall judge you only by it and by your Constitutions. Please tell your daughters of the Woods also that I shall be a father to you, and, like you, I entertain the same sweet hope that the enemy of all good will never succeed in disturbing the happy harmony that should exist between religious Communities and the shepherd of the flock. It seems to me that if we both seek the greater glory of God, we must necessarily agree.

As soon as I can get off for a day I shall go to see you, which I hope will be soon. While awaiting this pleasure, I beg you to present to your Community my sentiments of devotedness and attachment; for yourself in particular accept the expression of my most profound respect and consideration.

✠ JOHN STEPHEN BAZIN, Bp. of Vincennes.

A month later Bishop Bazin again wrote to Mother Theodore:

Your father having learned that you are very much better, and wishing for your entire recovery, hastens to send you a letter from the Bishop of Mans, which was received this morning.

Yes, good Mother, the wishes and hopes of the Bishop of Mans will be realized. I hope that you will ever find in me a father, a confidant, a friend in Jesus Christ, to whom you will be able to confide all your anxieties without fear. You will feel my authority only as a support to assist you to observe your Rules in all their perfection. A Bishop ought to be for a Superior who has the spirit of her state a lever to aid her to raise up the heaviest burdens, a light to enlighten her in her doubts, and a confidant to whom she may confide her pains, and from whom she may draw the consolation she stands in need of.

Your good Sisters of Vincennes gave me the hope that you will soon come to complete your recovery here. If that were possible it would be a great satisfaction for me; we should have the time to speak at leisure. I do not foresee that I can go to St. Mary's for some weeks yet. I recommend myself to your fervent prayers and to those of your Community. Believe me for life in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Yours very devotedly,

✠ JOHN STEPHEN, Bp. of Vincennes.

This kindness of Bishop Bazin consoled the hearts of all at St. Mary's, and the part that the Bishop of Mans took in the amicable adjustment of the Congregation's affairs with the new Bishop of Vincennes, is made the subject of a very grateful recognition in Mother Theodore's next letter to Bishop Bouvier:

St. Mary's, Dec. 4, 1847.

My very good Father:

It seems that God wishes to render His gifts still dearer to us by causing them to pass through your hands before reaching us. I have just had a new proof of this.

Your letter of October 30th came to Bishop Bazin on the last day of Nov.; he hastened to send it to us with kind assurances of his devotedness. Good and venerated Father, how shall we ever express to you our gratitude? Without you where should we now be? Our hearts shall never cease to offer their petitions to Heaven for your happiness. . . .

My illness has prevented me from seeing Bishop Bazin; but from what those persons who have seen him tell me, I am led to hope that better days will soon dawn for Indiana and for our Congregation. It is said he has much of the kindness of Bishop Bruté, although not his oratorical talent. No one regrets that he has not this gift; he is pious, humble, and of an amiable simplicity. He seems also to have a very generous heart; every one believes that he will do good to souls.

Sister St. Francis, who has been ill since her return from Vincennes, is somewhat better. The two of us together do not count for a half. She offers you her profound respects, as do all your other daughters. Deign to bless them and to remember them before the altar. Pray for me, the most needy.

Mother Mary, the Superior General of Ruillé, did not fail to express to her far-away children the share she took in their good fortune. January 29, 1848, she wrote:

For several months we have been expecting to hear from you. At last your welcome letters of Dec. 4th have been received, which give us the assurance that our prayers for your welfare have been heard, for we hoped and prayed

that your new Bishop would break the chain which has bound you to the cross for well-nigh eight years. You alone can understand, my dear daughters, the joy that these good letters have given us, as you know how we have shared in the pains, contradictions, and great trials to which Heaven has subjected you since you left France. Now, do not think of the past any more; never speak of it, and do not allow him to be spoken of who caused the troubles, and who was only the instrument that God made use of to aid you in forming yourselves according to our divine Model. Do you wish to know, dear Sister, of what utility these mercies have been to your little Congregation? They have served, more than peace and prosperity, to establish it on a solid foundation by showing its members the necessity and efficacy of prayer, the strength of union, and the advantages which tribulations procure when borne with courage in the spirit of faith. Prayer, fraternal union, and love of the cross will then be, as it were, the foundation-stones of this edifice erected to the greater glory of God. . . . Our little Congregation goes on as usual; God has blessed it, having first tried it, as you no doubt remember. Your best friends are still alive, but we are all growing pretty old. Since your last visit, we have made twelve new foundations—that makes eighty-two all told. We endeavor to do all the good we can, and we would do more did we enjoy all the liberty that is given you in the United States; yet we console ourselves thinking that the more difficulties there are in doing good, the more merit there will be. . . .

Adieu, my dear Sister Theodore. Tell all your daughters of Indiana that their *Grandmother* Mary loves them all very much, and that she begs of them to pray for her.

That Providence takes care of His children at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods was proved by another event

which transpired the day after Bishop Bazin's consecration. The Seminary was going to have Father Corbe as its Superior—that was the sacrifice the Community was called upon to make. Father Corbe, knowing what the change meant to the Sisters, begged the Bishop to permit him to decline. "But, what can I do? Whom shall I ask?" said the good Bishop, sorely distressed. "M. de St. Palais is the man," replied Father Corbe. The suggestion was acted upon, and the Bishop's choice was made known to Rev. M. de St. Palais; but he felt unwilling to accept the responsible position. He set out from Madison fully determined not to accept the appointment, and upon arriving at Vincennes he went directly to the Bishop's room, where he found him in tears at the foot of his crucifix. Somewhat perplexed, Father St. Palais stood for a moment without speaking; then the Bishop arose from his knees and threw his arms around the good Father's neck, embracing him and weeping all the more. He asked Father St. Palais if he had not come to stay with him, to be his friend, and to assist him to carry the heavy burden that God had imposed upon him. "I have just parted with my father, my best friend; Mgr. Portier has gone. You will remain with me, will you not?" Father St. Palais could not resist such an appeal, and his contemplated refusal was turned into a promise that he would remain with him at Vincennes.

Addressing Mother Theodore in a letter dated December 30th, Bishop Bazin says:

Great questions have been debated and settled within the past few days at Vincennes. John Stephen Bazin is now the owner of St. Gabriel's College, which for the future

will be both seminary and college, admitting Catholics only. The good Sisters of Providence will take up their quarters in the vacated Seminary, where they will conduct their school and also take in orphans. The Sisters here know nothing about this arrangement yet, but I feel confident they will not weep at leaving Market Street and coming nearer to God.

I am really delighted that Sister St. Francis has asked so many good things for me of the divine Infant, St. Stephen, and, I suppose, of St. John, my first patron. She did well not to have asked a "peppered bouquet" of the beloved disciple, for I do not know exactly what he would have answered, he whose only maxim was, *love one another.*

I have written long letters to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, telling them, among other things, that my Sisters give me the greatest hope for the diocese, that they are very holy women, etc. If I have not told the truth Mother Theodore will be so good as to pray for me. Yesterday I took up a heavy cross in assuming all the debts of the Eudists. I had to do it or see our holy religion disgraced by the bankruptcy of St. Gabriel's College, which was to have been disposed of by the sheriff.

On January 5th the little Community at St. Mary's was rendered very happy by the arrival of Bishop Bazin, who remained a whole week with them, taking notice of everything, visiting the school, inspecting the improvements, and suggesting others. Several times he spoke on subjects of a spiritual nature to the assembled Sisters, always encouraging them to perfect themselves in the spirit of their holy vocation, and foretelling to them the great things their Community would accomplish. The fervor he witnessed there called forth remarks of the most complimentary nature after he

left, and, like every one else who made the acquaintance of Mother Theodore, he held the foundress in the highest esteem and veneration.

The kindness shown by the Bishop in transferring the Sisters to a more suitable house at Vincennes was made more evident still by the active part he himself took in the moving—carrying the furniture and providing whatever was needed in the new building. This generous act was soon followed by the signing of the deed for the property at St. Mary's, which put the Sisterhood in legal possession of their convent home. Alas! that the day's fair dawning should so soon be shrouded over! that a most unexpected occurrence should attend this last act of the beloved Bishop, who could not do enough to testify his good-will for his spiritual daughters! It was with his dying hand he signed the deed, only six months after his consecration. His sudden departure to another life was a great affliction to the whole diocese, but nowhere was it a more poignant grief than at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Mother Theodore thus communicates this, their new sorrow to her ever-dear Bishop Bouvier:

VINCENNES, IND.
Easter Sunday, April 24, 1848.

It is almost in the light of the funeral tapers burning near the mortal remains of Bishop Bazin that I trace these few lines to you. Yes, my Father, this venerable prelate is dead; he who, in only six months, had healed so many wounds, and whose loss occasions so great a grief to the hearts of all who have known him, especially those of his poor daughters of the forest, whom he protected with truly paternal kindness and whom he leaves

once more without a guardian,—he is no more. How God tries our poor diocese! What will become of it!

*Providence of God, support of the widow and the orphan.* I do not cease to hope, for He who has protected us with so much love dies not. He will still defend us. Besides, I have the firm confidence that the one for whom we weep will intercede for us in Heaven, where, I trust, he is, or will very soon be. The sublime virtues which he practised so perfectly until the end leave no doubt of it. I should never have known him well had not Providence furnished me the occasion of being with him during his last moments; it was my privilege to render him some little service, which was the opportunity to see in the dear patient some very precious qualities. I admired in him especially two virtues very rare in our days—a profound humility and an immense charity. In his last moments these virtues shone in him in a particular manner, with the greatest lustre. I shall never forget what he said to us before receiving the last sacraments. We were eight present at that moment, and all of us accompanied the Blessed Sacrament, bearing tapers. The Superior of the Seminary, Father St. Palais, was there, the Superior of the College, Father Chassée, also, and several other priests, besides one of the laity [a notary]. With what fire the poor Bishop spoke, disclosing a heart burning with love for all without exception! Every one melted into tears; nothing was heard but suppressed sobs mingling with the death-rattle of the dying prelate. Then he called me to his side, gave me his blessing for all the Community, and said: "Do tell all your Sisters that I love your Congregation tenderly. God knows that, had I lived longer, I should have shrunk from no sacrifice for its spiritual and temporal prosperity; assure them that such were my desires and intentions."

Notwithstanding his state of agony he was more occupied with others than himself. What a beautiful soul!

In a circular letter, which Mother Theodore sent to the houses of the Congregation on the occasion of the Bishop's death, she says:

We cannot deny, my dear daughters, that the loss we have just sustained is immeasurable, and may have for our Congregation the saddest consequences. However, we shall not be discouraged; let us resign ourselves lovingly to the will of God. He is never so much a father as when He afflicts His children. He has always protected us; if we love Him He will never forsake us.

On another occasion she speaks thus:

Yes, Bishop Bazin was a saint. I fear not to say it. . . . But how did he arrive at perfection? By the daily practice of two virtues especially, namely, humility and charity. Only of the latter will I speak to-day, and only a few words at that. Oh! what charity he did have! And with what interest he spoke of our Congregation! His affection had nothing human in it; his love was pure because it came from God; it was all for God. Yes, he loved us tenderly, and would you know why? Because he thought we were charitable; he thought love and concord reigned amongst us, and he who was all charity loved in us this virtue. We are honored to have had the esteem of our holy Bishop. May he never find, in looking down upon us from his heavenly home, that he had been deceived! Let us be the true disciples of Jesus by our charity, that we may be the worthy daughters of our lamented Bishop. Let me say it again—and never tire of hearing me say it—*My little children, love one another.* That was St. John's daily exhortation and his dying admonition. Yes, love one another, for it is the whole law, since the second commandment is like unto the first. We

cannot love God and not love our neighbor; the two loves are inseparable—rather, they are one.

I have observed and examined much; even now I have just seen four different Communities, and I repeat it again and always, let us love one another. The good, the happiness of the religious life, wherein there is so great diversity of characters and tastes, consists in mutual support. Charity further consists in loving sincerely those who might happen to offend us. It was in this particular that the charity of our good Bishop principally manifested itself. There were some who spoke against him, who blamed him, and who sought to annoy and trouble him. *To* them and *of* them he spoke most tenderly; he would not suffer them to be blamed in his presence, and he defended them with so much address that no one dared to accuse them before him.

As soon as Bishop Bouvier received the sad intelligence of Bishop Bazin's death, he wrote to Mother Theodore:

LE MANS, June 24, 1848.

The distressing news you announce, my very dear daughter, has deeply afflicted us. I assure you I share in your sorrow and that of all your devoted Sisters, who are very dear to me. I should like to be able to gather you all around me and address you some words of comfort. These painful events teach us one thing; it is, that God alone is something. We are only instruments in His hands. He elevates or debases us, uses us in His works or does without us as He pleases. When we have done all that is in our power, we must say, in the words of the Evangelist, we are unprofitable servants, and say it not only in word, but in heart and all sincerity. Meanwhile, let us ask with faith and hope for a worthy successor to this good Bishop

who has been carried off so prematurely. Our own supplications tend especially to this end.

Our situation in France is far from being encouraging. The evil is great under several aspects and threatens to grow much worse. The will of God be done!

Mother Mary also hastened to send some words of comfort to her poor children in the forest.

All that you had said to me, my dear daughter [she wrote], of your beloved Community, and above all of the interest in it of your excellent prelate, went straight to my heart; it appeared that, satisfied with so many sacrifices, God wished you now to enjoy the harvest of the seeds sown in sorrow and watered with your tears. But alas! the next evening after your good letters had gladdened us, we read in the *Univers* that a premature death had carried off your Bishop, your father, your only protector! Poor children! What are the designs of God over you? I can only pity you from the depths of my heart. But I cannot think of what our heavenly Father has done for you without feeling my confidence reanimated. The short sojourn of Mgr. Bazin at Vincennes appears to have had no other purpose than to consolidate your work, by the approval of your Rules and Constitutions and the making over to you of the property at St. Mary's. Arouse your courage, then, and let all the afflictions that overwhelm you serve only to render you more fervent, more attached to God and to His service, more resigned to carry the cross of Our Saviour. Yes, courage, confidence, love!

We thank you for the generous hospitality you so kindly offer us in your Indiana. Until now Heaven has thrown its protecting mantle over France; we stand as much amazed as did the people of old when they saw the manna falling, and cried out in their astonishment, What is this?

In our admiration we say like Jacob, God is here, His hand directs, He alone conducts all; men are only instruments used to accomplish His designs, which are hidden from all. We cannot know or explain them, but in proportion as they manifest themselves; for example, on the 24th of February we said to ourselves, Behold the retribution applied to its full extent; with the same measure that you meet withal, it shall be measured to you again. The name Republic inspires a certain feeling of terror on account of its associations with the fateful '93; this one we hope will be more benign. . . .

Mother Theodore learned with great sorrow of the forced abdication of Louis Philippe; for St. Mary's had not forgotten the royal bounty it received from the now exiled King and his august consort, Queen Amelia. It was on account of attacks made on religious houses by the Republican government that Mother Theodore had offered St. Mary's to the Community at Ruillé to be their home of exile, should circumstances oblige them to leave their native land. Happily, events did not issue in extreme measures; the tide of persecution was stayed, and it remained for the wisdom of the present generation to renew the attack and proceed from menace to expulsion. What will be the outcome of all this? Is that country to lose its prestige and its glory? Oh, great must be thy sin, fair France, thou the first-born of the Church, when the Lord God thus hands thee over to thy enemies!

Many more details were given in the above letter concerning Bishop Bazin's illness and death, his labors, and the devotedness of his people; some items mentioned are merely of local interest; finally it announced

that M. de St. Palais was appointed administrator during the vacancy of the see. The clergy took advantage to say to his Grace the Archbishop of St. Louis, who, with Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati and Bishop Spalding of Louisville, was present for the funeral ceremony, that they hoped Rome would be pleased to ratify the choice of the dying prelate, who appointed as administrator Father St. Palais. Their desires and hopes were realized, though it was not until after seven months' waiting that the good tidings reached Vincennes. When the propitious hour was come and the flock had a shepherd again, Mother Theodore hastened to inform Bishop Bouvier.

St. Mary's, Dec. 9, 1848.

The first need of our afflicted hearts is to pour out their sorrow into yours and to seek there a consolation which we have never failed to find. It is also to you that they turn in their joys, that you may share in them; for if your paternal heart renders you so sensible to our sorrows, it cannot let you remain indifferent to our consolations. We have a bishop-elect in the person of the Vicar General and Administrator, Rt. Rev. Maurice de St. Palais. God has given us the one the whole diocese earnestly asked for since the death of Bishop Bazin. He belongs to an eminently Christian family; three of his sisters are Sisters of Charity. I know one of them at Angers; she is as fervent as an angel. She is the Superior of the "Providence" at Angers.

Bishop St. Palais made his studies at St. Sulpice, where he was ordained. There he became acquainted with Bishop Bruté, who prevailed on him to come to Indiana. He has been here for twelve years, working with zeal and success in the midst of privations of every conceivable

kind. He has done incalculable good. He has built several churches; his parish (Madison) parted with him with the deepest regret, as the happiness of possessing such a pastor was fully appreciated. During all our years of trial he has ever shown himself a most devoted friend and protector.

His administration resembles yours, which renders him still more dear to us. Far from destroying the Rule, he will enable us and require us to fulfil it more exactly, for he is eminently pious and possessed of very good judgment. He is so poor, and the diocese is in so desolate a condition, that he has been necessitated to close the seminary, not being able to meet the expenses of that house. If the Council of the Propagation of the Faith does nothing more for this poor Indiana, I do not know what will become of the clergy. . . .

It is very probable that the new Bishop will remove our Mother House to Madison, where he is going to fix his see. We are truly very badly situated here. At present we are entirely cut off from the world by the overflow of the Wabash River, which has not been so high since 1818; the waters have come to a point only half a league from us, and so charged with driftwood that it is impossible to cross over to the town.

Events have proved that St. Mary's is indeed the Blessed Virgin's land, and that the Sisters of Providence were destined for this lovely vale. The Bishop's intention of removing the see was never realized; it remained for the present Bishop, Rt. Rev. F. S. Chatard, D.D., to make the transfer, not to the city of Beautiful Hills on the Ohio, but to Indianapolis, the capital of the State, which in its sudden rise has grown to be not only the largest city in Indiana, but the largest in the United States of those not situated on navigable waters.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

PROSPERITY OF ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS. — BISHOP MARTIN OF NATCHITOCHES APPLIES FOR SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE.—MOTHER THEODORE'S SORROW AT THE DEATH OF SISTER MARY LIGUORI TIERCIN, SISTER SERAPHINE CARROLL, AND SISTER MARY JOSEPH PARVEILLAN.

Faith draws many beautiful lessons in interpreting the poem of *God's Ways*. Analyzing things in the light of His divine radiance, it perceives delightful meanings clothed in the symbolism of daily events; it comprehends how human frailties and perplexities, misfortunes and miseries within and without, are the mute strings of a harp which need but to be touched by the Supreme Artist to discourse sweetest music to our souls; it sees that, notwithstanding the calculations of mankind and the antagonism its genius may offer, "in retrospect and in prospect the human ever leads to the divine;" that all anxiety, labor, conflict, and sufferings of every kind are, unmistakably, God's way leading to the vision of peace; that again the work of discord makes the temple of concord, even as in the days of the Gracchi.

Easter's gladness followed Good Friday's sorrow; so in the life of Mother Theodore we have come to the dawning of the Glorious Mysteries.

Recalling that she remarked the progress made by

their vessel in the storm and compared it to the soul's advance under tempestuous winds, the same words may be applied to her little Community, as in looking back we behold the results of its kinetic forces.

Attention so far has been concentrated chiefly on the point of securing a solid basis; but it must not be supposed that the Sisters awaited inertly the issue of their trials. With each baffled hope a new fire seemed to be enkindled. Fervor and zeal were on the increase, and divine Providence set its seal upon their work, by bringing it to a bountiful fruition. The people, and especially the clergy, saw the divine impress; hence the sympathy and encouragement that were so liberally extended. In one letter Mother Theodore says:

Our Congregation is everywhere appreciated; Sisters are called for in almost every town of the diocese. I have just been obliged to write a letter of refusal to a German priest, pastor of a large Congregation near Cincinnati; and last week we refused to form an establishment at Indianapolis, where non-Catholics as well as Catholics press us to begin our work there. Our Sisters have been at Terre Haute about a month, although their house is not yet completed. Good Father Lalumière gave us the ground on which to build. Thanks to our dear Lord, who deigns to make use of our unworthiness! May His holy name be praised forever!

Had we thirty Sisters more, ready for the missions, we could employ them all. There are so few vocations in this country.

We read again:

Recently I heard that the good people of Terre Haute intend to build a hospital in their city, and that they hope to

have some of our Sisters to take charge of it. If this is true, it would be one of the most precious occasions of doing good that could be presented to us; but there will be no question at all of our undertaking this work, unless our Superiors in France could give us two or three Sisters trained by Sister Athanasius, or some one else who understands how to conduct a hospital. . . .

It is certain the town of Terre Haute will become one of the largest in Indiana on account of its position; they are already making railroads, canals, and doing away with the obstructions in the Wabash which prevent the passage of steamboats. They do here in one year what in the Old World would not be done in ten.

A letter to Bishop Bouvier from Sister St. Francis Xavier gives this item:

"Last month Bishop Blanc of New Orleans wrote to Mother Theodore for Sisters for his diocese. We could not accept the proposal; we are too poor in subjects."

St. Mary's good old friend, Bishop Martin of Natchitoches, also makes an appeal. He addresses the venerated foundress with great hopes:

Worthy Mother and Dear Daughter:

May the peace of God be with you and with all your dear daughters!

Do not nourish evil thoughts in your heart and say that if Mgr. Martin writes, after two years of obstinate silence, it is because his own interests are concerned. As to personal interests, I have none at all any more, my good Mother. I do not belong to myself any longer. Personally I am dead. My body, my soul, my faculties, my thoughts, my affections, my desires, my present, my future —all belong to the Church of Jesus Christ;—all that I have, all that I am belongs to the Church, my poor Bride.

I think only of her, I live only for her; through her and for her I hope to die. It is for her that I write to you now. The field which has been given me is entirely uncultivated, fallow ground; so much the better, if God will be with me, as I believe He will.

My first need is a sufficient and devoted clergy: towards this, my good Mother, you cannot contribute. I would not even ask for your Father Corbe, because it would be exposing myself to a refusal; but my second want, or that of my diocese, which is the same thing, is the education of youth. I have as my only resource the Convent of the Sacred Heart, a very precious establishment for persons in easy circumstances who wish to send their daughters as boarders, but absolutely insufficient from its very nature, being too restricted in action.

Thirty families in easy circumstances are not the people; and God has made me, according to the expression of St. Bernard, *The Father of the people.* I want to put Christian education within the reach of all, to multiply schools in my diocese for the salvation of the lambs of my flock. I shall have Jesuits, and Brothers for the boys, even should I have to go to Rome; but the poor little girls—who will have pity on their souls? During the retreat prior to my consecration, and on the day itself of the ceremonies, I was thinking, good Mother Theodore, of you. Bring to my diocese a strong and healthy branch of that tree which you have planted at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, which has grown up among tribulations, and which has been so signally blessed by God.

Without being more of a prophet than it becomes the least of the Bishops of the Church to be, I can foretell that this branch would become a tree as fruitful as the parent tree, and that its branches would spread out, first over my diocese, then all around us. My plan is this: There is at Alexandria an excellent priest, influential, able to make

anything succeed. He is ambitious enough to ask for two establishments as soon as possible, one of Brothers, the other of Sisters. He takes charge of the first expenses and would procure pupils. There your seed is to be planted. Thirty miles from Alexandria a parish of eight thousand Catholics would give you another house; here in Natchitoches you would found a third, besides an asylum and house for the aged poor; and so on indefinitely. I am going earnestly about it, you see, though much is for the future; for the present I ask only that you furnish me within the year a good staff, mostly English, for Alexandria. Consider if you can give me any hope; if so I shall be with you after Easter, on my way to Rome. My journey will embrace Baltimore, New York, Havre, Rennes, Saint-Brieuc, Nantes, Le Mans, Lyons, and the Eternal City. I must have men, bread to feed them with, colleges and schools to extract from my poor diocese the poison of infidelity; and as long as I shall have life I shall beseech Heaven and earth in order to render the field easier of cultivation for my successors. Answer me as soon as possible.

✠ A. Martin, Bp. Natch.

To refuse so cherished a friend, and to renounce such brilliant prospects, was a sore trial to Mother Theodore's great heart, a heart that could make any conceivable and reasonable sacrifice. But

> "Potential merit stands for actual
> Where only opportunity doth want,
> Not will nor power."

The opportunity and the will were here, but the power? Subjects were numerous enough at the beginning, considering the circumstances; but now, the diary tells us, "we have not received a postulant for a year; and of the novices who have completed their

term of probation five have been dismissed as unsuitable."

Moreover, death's angel had made its visitation; the silent Reaper had gathered in several beautiful souls to present them to the heavenly Bridegroom.

The first of these early blossoms to be culled was Sister Mary Liguori Tiercin, whose life seemed the most precious to Mother Theodore of all her daughters, perhaps, not excepting Sister St. Francis Xavier, as it was she whom they looked upon as the successor of the Superior General, when death would oblige them to replace the Mother Foundress. A letter to Bishop de la Hailandière from Sister St. Francis confirms this statement. She says therein: "If we did not find it possible to consent to an election last year, much less could we do so now, since Our Lord has taken to Himself our dear Sister M. Liguori, to whom we looked as the only possible successor in the event of our Mother's departure."

In an earlier chapter we have spoken of this valuable subject on whom the greatest hopes were built. Her career terminated after only six years of missionary work, consumption claiming her as its victim.

She opened the house at Saint-Francisville, and also closed it; opened and closed Saint-Peter's and began the mission at Madison. She styled herself the *unlucky foundress;* and in a letter to Mother Theodore, in which she details facts showing the difficulties that were encountered, she says simply: "You know, my dear Mother, nothing succeeds where I am. I spoil God's work all the time, though how, I never know; you must not refuse me more penance." What this penance was

by which she sought to draw down God's blessing on her work we cannot ascertain; we can judge, however, of her fervor in this respect from another instance, when, to obtain the cure of Mother Theodore, her resolution was to fast for one year, taking nothing whatever in the morning, and only a cup of tea with some dry bread in the evening, except in case of illness or travelling, when the year was to be prolonged by a time corresponding to the interruptions. She takes very good care, however, to state what kind of penance she does not relish. "Dear Mother," she says, "never call me your *good* Sister again; it is a penance which I intreat you not to inflict upon me—it is too dry."

Her beautiful, humble spirit is further evidenced in these lines: "We will redouble our prayers for you and for our dear Congregation; as for myself, I shall endeavor to work with all my strength to become good, for it is perhaps on account of my tepidity that the Congregation is so sorely tried."

The mission of Madison in pioneer days abounded with incident. The town rivalled in prosperity all others in the state, and the opening of a school there was promising in almost every detail; but, like every work that belongs to God, the sign of the cross was upon it. The Sisters met with violent opposition, nay persecution, from the non-Catholic element. Several ministers accused them of atrocious crimes. One said from his pulpit that he had seen the Sisters climb through the school-house windows and carry off the books of his pupils; he even went so far as to accuse them of killing a child that had been kidnapped; the capture of the abductor and the return of the child

was their acquittal in the court of public sentiment, and a remarkable increase in the number of pupils, mostly non-Catholic, was the reward of their meekness under calumny. Often when the Sisters appeared on the streets going to the church, a mile distant, they were followed by crowds of ruffians shrieking and throwing snowballs, stones, eggs, and dirt at them. Fortunately the Sisters were not injured, though their garb sometimes suffered vile defacement. "One of them spat on me," writes Sister M. Liguori; "but that did not kill me; others threw stones at us, but our good God did not allow them to hurt us."

The second year of the mission she writes: "What shall I say about our friend Curtis, and two others who have joined hands with him to prevent our return? They have left nothing undone or unsaid, as you will see in the newspaper that we send you. Perhaps you have heard of the article in the *Catholic Advocate*, an answer by the Rev. Father Mack of Louisville to Mr. Curtis' criticism on our examination. Their fury is far from being appeased; they try to take the children against the will of their parents, to prevent their coming to us; they have a secret convention formed of several ladies who are commissioned to go, under pretext of visiting, to entreat their friends not to allow their daughters to be educated by nuns. But there is no cause for you, dear Mother, to be uneasy about us; they may try to frighten us at night by crying out "Nuns" and throwing stones against the house; but the police have been notified. Besides, why should we fear now any more than last year? God protects us still." The next letter adds: "We have just learned

that the individuals who wanted to frighten us with their stones and menaces do not belong to any denomination. . . . A troop of ruffians surrounded our house on the night of the 2d [Sept., 1845], made a great noise, and tried to enter; there were about twelve on the top of the fence, when two young Irishmen who kept guard over us fired a pistol, which put the rabble to flight."

The following January we read: "Yesterday Mr. C—— distributed by hundreds among our children pamphlets in which are to be found the idols of the Indians, the superstitions and cruelties of the idolaters; . . . he preaches on idolatry; a good portion of his zeal is for us, as we are charged with adoring statues, with committing absurdities similar to those of the Indians," etc.

The cause of these displays of fanaticism may be traced to the Know-nothing movement, which at that period was reaching its culminating point; having been prepared by the example of mob violence that burned the Ursuline Convent at Boston in 1834, it was inflamed by the defamatory harangues of the infamous Beecher, who fled to the West carrying with him that pernicious spirit of bigotry which gradually infected the entire Mississippi Valley.

The conduct of the excited populace gave a precarious existence for some time to the convent at Madison.

Sister M. Liguori was not easily intimidated; she could fold her arms and compose herself to sleep after the mob had disappeared, confiding in the protection of Providence, though her companions would often

spend the entire night in vigil, too frightened to obtain any rest. "These little troubles do not afflict me; it is what you and our beloved Congregation are suffering that grieves me," she wrote to Mother Theodore.

About this time the indefatigable Mother Foundress fell ill again and her life was despaired of. Hearing of her illness, two of the Sisters of Madison went every day to pour out their grief before Jesus in the Sacrament of His love. They lived a great distance from the church, as we have said, and could only go in the morning to Mass; an evening visit infringed upon their other duties. Of this visit Sister M. Liguori writes: "It is a great consolation to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, if we could have this privilege at least a few times in the week!"

We who have the Adorable Presence abiding always with us under our own roof cannot fully estimate the spiritual privations that our first Sisters suffered; neither can we imagine their consolation when, after three or four weeks without Mass or the sacraments, they could again receive their Heavenly Guest, the manna of their souls.

A privation of this kind occurred at Madison in 1846, when the parish was left without a pastor, Father Delaune having gone to the Louisville diocese, where he opened up St. Mary's College in Kentucky, Brother Joseph and four novices from Notre Dame assisting him in the work. This house, it would appear, was intended by the Very Rev. Father Sorin to be the novitiate of his Order, where he hoped to have more liberty of action than in the Vincennes diocese; but upon the arrival of Bishop Bazin this design was aban-

doned. The long waiting for a pastor at Madison was rewarded by the arrival of Rev. M. de St. Palais, under whose paternal care almost all miseries were relieved. There was one, however, over which he had no control—the health of Sister M. Liguori. Her last letter from Madison says: "I have only one good day in the week, that on which I receive Holy Communion; that day I am always so well and strong, not languishing as on other days. I remarked this the second time I communicated in bed, and it continues ever since. Father St. Palais observed the same, and he spoke to me about it last Monday. I had never before experienced the effect which the Blessed Sacrament produces on the body; but this is too striking not to be felt, and to cause us to return thanks to God for it. Oh, when shall I be able to go to the church and receive my God more frequently?"

The disease made rapid progress. Although the weather was severe, it was necessary to remove the patient at once, if they hoped to have her reach St. Mary's alive. Father St. Palais and Sister M. Celestia accompanied her in the stage. At Terre Haute the river was frozen over; as Sister could not walk, and teams could not cross on the ice, she was placed on a chair and thus conveyed over, with very much fatigue to herself and to those who performed the charitable deed. Then, if never before, did they sincerely regret that the convent was on the west side of the Wabash.

On the twenty-ninth of January Sister M. Liguori breathed her last, a few minutes after having answered all the prayers recited for the dying. Mother Theodore writes of her departure:

When we had finished she begged me to thank the Sisters and to ask them to go to the chapel and recite the Miserere for her; then making a great effort she said, "and the Memorare." That was her last word. Mother Theodore took occasion then to speak to the Sisters of the hidden virtues of this dear daughter, whom she offered to her Creator, regretfully indeed, but pleased that her first soul-gift should be so worthy of the divine Majesty.

From St. Mary's College, Marion County, Kentucky, Father Delaune writes to Mother Theodore:

February, 1846.

It was only yesterday I learned of the death of your dear daughter. Oh, why was it not given me to assist at her last moments for my own edification? And perhaps I might have been able to help you bear the painful stroke. God alone can sweeten the bitterness of the sacrifice which he has demanded of you. I know that he has given you a strong soul; you have at the same time a tender heart, a mother's heart, and it is not difficult for me to understand the anguish which has wounded and still continues to wound it. I believe you will never be fully consoled till you meet together in heaven. Weep then at the foot of the cross with the Mother of sorrows. Yes, my good Mother, it is your lot, and it has been so for years, in this strange land to be fed with the bread of tears. Joy is not for you in this world, save that which you possess with St. Paul when he said that he superabounded with joy in his tribulations.

After all, is it not more profitable for us to suffer? Either suffer or die, said St. Teresa, so burdensome would life have been to her without sufferings. It is by this life of sorrow that God renders you more capable of doing more for the sanctification of your Community than you would otherwise do, because you are an instrument better polished

and refined. Let us not be discouraged! Nothing suffers in the designs of God; on the contrary, things prosper when accompanied with crosses and sacrifices. Madison sustains a great loss. Let us beg of the divine Goodness, if it be His holy will, to raise up another Sister Mary Liguori. I have offered up the holy sacrifice for her to-day, and I doubt not but that, as she was so charitable to me on earth, she will not forget me in heaven.

The reaper Death was not satisfied with one conquest. Another flower of sweet fragrance that drooped very soon after Sister M. Liguori had departed this life was Sister Seraphine Carroll, a charmingly innocent soul that owed the privileges of her singular and brief career to her great confidence in the Blessed Virgin. "She died as cheerfully as she lived," is the written memorial of her. The greatest sacrifice of her life, she said, was that of becoming a Religious after she had been told by some one in jest that she would never be permitted to laugh again if she became a nun. It was amusing to see her relief when the first recreation hour arrived, and she discovered the sportive deception. Always frail, she succumbed to a cold that attacked her lungs while yet a novice; she went to her reward at the age of twenty one.

As the final hour drew near she was permitted to pronounce her vows, from which moment her desire to die increased to such an extent that Mother Theodore thought she must moderate it, to be perfectly disposed in holy indifference. The patient said: "Now that I have taken my vows I will not have to remain in purgatory, except for the faults I commit during my sickness: I can go straight to heaven." "Why do you wish so ardently to die?" one of the attendants

asked her; "are you tired of suffering?" "Oh, no," she replied, "I have never been so happy as since I am sick in bed; but I want to see Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin." After the burial of Sister M. Liguori one of the Sisters returned to the infirmary bathed in tears. Sister Seraphine chided her, saying: "It is not well to cry so, dear Sister; our Sisters of France have prepared a mansion near them in heaven for us; we must go and take possession of it. Our dear Sisters from Ruillé will be so glad to see us from St.-Mary-of-the-Woods."

When Mother Theodore perceived that the dying Sister could no longer swallow she told her that she would soon go. "Oh! but I want to go with Our Lord; I wish to receive Holy Communion again," she said. Being told that she had received that day, and now since she could not swallow a drop of water she must offer the sacrifice to God, she answered: "If my Sisters pray for me I shall live till midnight, and Father Corbe will come, and—and—our dear Lord is powerful enough to let me swallow the Sacred Host." She had several sinking spells that made them think it impossible for her to live till morning or even till midnight; so she was urged repeatedly to resign herself to the sacrifice; but her faith was unshaken; she begged them to arrange the table as the midnight hour drew near, and all was done as she directed.

Father Corbe arrived at twelve o'clock with the Blessed Sacrament. Sister Seraphine received with indescribable happiness, swallowed the Sacred Host, and expired a few minutes after.

"When she saw Our Lord enter into her poor chamber for the last time," writes Mother Theodore, "her

eyes were brilliant with delight. It was at this moment she could say more tenderly than ever the words she had repeated so often before: 'O my God, how good it is to die a Religious!'"

If death threw over the convent household its dark pall, a new light was stealing in through the crevices of sorrow's clouds. This cheery beam was the proposal to open a house at Fort Wayne. Father Benoit solicited a foundation, and it pleased Mother Theodore to be able to accede to his request, not so much in grateful appreciation of the Rev. Father's friendship, though this was a weighty consideration, as in view of the good that would be accomplished in that vicinity. To gain souls, to instruct the ignorant—that always enkindled anew her zeal and enthusiasm; so the occasion of opening a new establishment was always one of great joy. Sister M. Magdalen, a person of exceptional administrative ability, was the Superior of this new house, but at the end of the first year she was obliged to retire on account of ill health. She was succeeded by Sister M. Joseph (Parveillan), who to precious advantages of nature and education joined the higher gifts of an enlightened and strong faith and most tender piety.

Sister M. Joseph, known in the world as Mlle. Josephine Parveillan, was born in Alsace of distinguished parents. Her father was a member of the bar at Severn. Reverses of fortune caused Mlle. Parveillan to experience the benefit of her early educational advantages. She entered into a Badoise family as governess to the two young countesses. Everywhere she gained the love and respect of all.

Some time later she was received into the Maison de Commerce of the Picquet family at Strasbourg.

In the midst of the pleasures of friendship and the enjoyments of society, she sought in a life of piety a happiness not to be found in the world. God recompensed her fervor by inspiring her with the idea of forsaking all for His service. She was received into a Community in Alsace devoted to the education of youth. It was this Community that had first promised Bishop de la Hailandière to send a colony of its members to found a house of the order in the diocese of Vincennes; but for reasons unknown to us the Superiors withdrew their promise. Father Picquet, the ecclesiastical Superior of the Sisters at Alsace, did not withdraw, however, the gift he had made to Bishop de la Hailandière, for the foundation of a Community of religious women in the diocese of Vincennes; and it was this grant chiefly that gave to the Sisters of Providence the right to the property at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

Mlle. Parveillan was one of the number selected for the Indiana foundation. She was a novice at the time. In order to arrange all her temporalities she was permitted to start in advance of the Sisters and visit her parents; she was then to join the others at Havre. As the time of departure approached she found herself in a painful position, having learned that the others were not coming. She had a great desire for the foreign missions, and, having been assured that other Religious would soon follow, she left France under the guardianship of Father Martin, who was the Vicar General of the Vincennes diocese. She was one of the four Sisters that awaited the Sisters from Ruillé upon

their arrival at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Writing to Bishop Bouvier soon after Sister M. Joseph's death, Mother Theodore says:

We have lost our good Sister M. Joseph, Superior of the house at Fort Wayne. It is a great loss for us who have so few local Superiors. The young people of this country are little qualified for government; their education renders them unfit; women are not employed in any business here in America. In the East, it is said, they are beginning to take up the French method; as yet we are strangers to the movement here in the West. . . . But there is no hypocrisy among our American subjects, nor dissimulation; on the contrary, they are, as a general rule, full of uprightness, of devotedness and simplicity; some are perfect models of innocence and fervor; but on the whole they have not the tender piety of the French.

Sister St. Francis adds a note to this letter, telling the Bishop of the loss the Community has sustained in the death of Sister M. Joseph Parveillan. She says: "We have just lost our best local Superior; her death leaves a great void."

The country around Fort Wayne included among the settlers many families from the East, eminent alike for their prosperity and their stanch Catholicity. Appreciating the advantages of education, the Academy at Fort Wayne found favor with them. Thus did success attend the institution from its very inception, and the Community looks to this house with pride and gratitude, being indebted to it for several of its most valuable subjects, among the earliest being the four daughters of Mr. Joseph Buchanan—Sisters M. Antoinette, St. Felix, Agatha, and M. Bernard—who have

rendered long and efficient service to the Congregation; Sister Josephine Guting, and the two daughters of Mr. Vincent O'Donnell, Sister M. Angèle and Sister M. Ambrose.

In mentioning the name of Sister M. Ambrose we have introduced one who has been intimately connected with the Community's affairs either as secretary or treasurer since 1863. There is scarce a firm in the country unacquainted with her pen, at least in the various lines of business that the magnitude of the institution at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods naturally touches upon.

The first decade of the Community's history in Indiana was closing in when Sister Mary Ambrose arrived at her forest convent home. It was the afternoon of anniversary day, Oct. 22, 1850. Her teaching career began at the Academy, where, with Sister St. Urban and Sister Maurice, she formed the happy triumvirate that will live forever in the memory and affection of all whose privilege it was at that time to claim St.-Mary-of-the-Woods as their alma mater.

We have seen in previous chapters how Providence was watching over the young Community during the days of its greatest trials; how, despite the fear that the tender plant could not take root in Indiana, new and highly qualified subjects were presenting themselves to the order. Among these the name of Sister St. Urban stands conspicuous, a name linked with the history of St. Mary's for more than forty years, a name consecrated by the dearest associations and embalmed in the memory of every student that attended St. Mary's during the lifetime of the venerated Sister. Her deep piety, her

firm yet gentle and dignified manner, gave her a sway over hearts that was most remarkable; the sweet charm of her influence was irresistible. If there was any one that could captivate the thoughtless and inspire a sense of womanly excellence, that one was Sister St. Urban. Having the most advanced class of pupils, she carefully prepared them by prudent counsel to meet the world that was waiting to receive them in their laurels. Her solicitude extended to every detail; yet, the instruction of converts was her dearest work, and Mother Theodore found great satisfaction in entrusting this task to her when the failing health of Sister St. Francis Xavier no longer permitted her to fulfil this loved duty. Sister St. Urban departed this life August 6, 1888, aged seventy-two years.

The third of the trio, as we have said, was Sister Maurice. Now that this dear Sister has been called to receive the reward of her long and happy life—seventy-two years, fifty-five of which constituted her religious career—what might not be said were full expression given to the sentiment that prevails! To Sister Maurice may happily be applied the words spoken by Our Lord of Nathaniel, a man in whom there was no guile. Her great heart was all-embracing; every one claimed her individual interest. Since her death, which occurred on the 13th of January, 1902, numberless expressions of sympathy and regret have been received, all including the idea that St.-Mary-of-the-Woods without Sister Maurice is almost inconceivable.

Few have been so generously gifted by nature as Sister Maurice; she was a naturalist, a scientist, an historian, a poet; but in art she was a genius. Her

earliest instructions in drawing were from her mistress of novices, Sister St. Francis Xavier, who, however, left her very soon to herself, feeling that her artistic instinct would develop without all the formalities of precept; and it did. Her genius found varied and manifold modes of expression. There is scarcely a hall or corridor that does not contain some specimen of her work; and the mission-houses, as well as the buildings at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, are enriched by her skill. It may be some fine large copy of the world's masterpieces; it may be only an ordo, a motto, or the mortuary tablet of the Sisters of Providence; in every case the touch of genius is there, the artist's stroke telling whose was the brush or pen that has left to the Community these valuable treasures. But herein lies not her glory. Sister Maurice was a humble, peaceful, and devoted Religious, indefatigable in labor, fervent, enthusiastically affectionate, and always young of heart, a perfect type of sweet simplicity, a most beautiful example of the zealous, self-sacrificing spirit which Mother Theodore sought to impart to her religious daughters.

None unless the foundress herself has surpassed Sister Maurice in devotion to the holy angels. Those guardian spirits seemed ever present to her thoughts. In their honor she compiled the Community's book of devotions for each day of the month of October, and her zeal to make the heavenly messengers known and honored extended to all her friends and pupils irrespective of their creeds. What better can be said, in reflecting upon her example, than the words that always accompanied her salutation: *Gelobt sei Jesus Christus in Ewigkeit!*

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

RT. REV. MAURICE DE ST. PALAIS CONFIRMS MOTHER THEODORE IN HER OFFICE OF SUPERIOR GENERAL.—FATHER DUPONTAVICE.—SISTER ST. FRANCIS XAVIER, THE *MARIE EUSTELLE* OF INDIANA.—ARRIVAL AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS OF ELVIRE LE FER DE LA MOTTE: (SISTER M. JOSEPH, 2D).—OTHER CANDIDATES FROM FRANCE.—SISTER M. THEODORE JOINS HER AUNT, THE VENERATED FOUNDRESS, AT ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.—THE BENEDICTINES IN INDIANA.—THE NEW MOTHER HOUSE OF THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE.—FEARS AND PRAYERS OF THE FOUNDRESS.

WHEREVER the faith was carried the cross was planted; but, while the cross symbolizes faith, it also stands for suffering, and it was not in the order of God's providence that it should stand an unsanctified sign. Anointed with the holy chrism, souls waxed strong; and when the recompense of joy followed, as it always does follow in the wake of affliction bearing the seal of divine consecration, the work of the apostolate expanded with blessed exuberance at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

The elevation to the episcopacy of the Rt. Rev. Maurice de St. Palais inaugurated a new era for the Congregation of Providence; and it has pleased the divine Majesty to grant the favor of undisturbed peace and tranquillity ever since, through the paternal

devotedness of Bishop St. Palais and his honored successor, the illustrious incumbent, Rt. Rev. F. S. Chatard, whose fatherly interest is regarded by the Community as one of the most precious dispensations of divine Providence in its behalf.

Bishop St. Palais understood perfectly the difficulties against which the Congregation had been struggling so long; he himself had espoused its cause and suffered for it. It is not surprising, then, that almost immediately after reaching his bishopric he should assure the Sisters of his unfailing support. Their greatest cause of happiness is found in the response of Bishop St. Palais to a petition sent by the Sisters, wherein he says:

> Convinced like yourselves that the good of the Community demands that Mother Theodore, foundress of the Sisters of Providence in Indiana, should be retained in the office of Superior during her lifetime, I accede to your desires and confirm with all my heart the nomination made by his Lordship, the Bishop of Mans.
>
> (Signed) MAURICE, Bp. of Vincennes.

Thus from the very beginning, and, as it were, by one stroke, the one great cause for uneasiness was removed at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. Though several very able subjects had entered the Community and acquired its spirit in a remarkably short time, experience was lacking to all. The love the Sisters had for Mother Theodore made them feel that no one could replace her, at least in their hearts; and the sweetest satisfaction they could have had was the assurance that she was to be their Mother until death. It was also a keen pleasure for them to know that this action of

the revered Bishop met the approval of ecclesiastics for whom they entertained the highest regard. Mgr. Perché, later Archbishop of New Orleans, telegraphed his congratulations to the Sisterhood; Bishop Timon of Buffalo expressed his satisfaction in a letter to Father Corbe; Bishop Lefèvre, referring to the tidings conveyed to him by Sister M. Cecilia, wrote: "It was very wise, and very kind in your good Bishop; I thank God." Other friends nearer home rejoiced with the Community and joined in the *Te Deums* that arose from grateful hearts at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. How fervently must have been repeated the words of the office: *The mercy of God is beautiful in time of affliction, as a cloud of rain in the time of drought!*

The gratitude and joy of the Sisters could not find adequate expression, and it was a satisfaction to the tender and gentle Bishop St. Palais to see the happiness and courage of his devoted Religious. Their comfort and peace were his most earnest desire; and as far as it depended on him, he was determined that nothing should henceforth disturb the serenity of their convent life. For this truly paternal regard during the nearly thirty years of his administration his memory is held in benediction; and his name is linked in blessedness with the names of Bishop Bouvier and Bishop Bazin, the Community's most devoted protectors.

Another way in which the tenderness of God's providence has always appealed to the Sisterhood is in the choice of Superiors that have been given to the Congregation from the beginning. The early members recognized the privilege that was theirs in having the

holy foundress for their leader, and esteemed it a great happiness to have lived with her. One of them, writing to a fond mother who had just given her daughter to the Community, said: "God inspired you to confide your treasure to Mother Theodore, of whom, were I to begin to speak, I should not know when to cease The longer I live with her the more I thank God for having called me to be formed by her. The Jesuit Fathers who give us our retreats say that they want to have for their missions Sisters formed by Mother Theodore. Father Corbe appreciates her as they do, and better still."

The Sisters of the present day feel that the venerated Mother Superior in departing bequeathed her spirit to her successors in the office; for neither time nor change of circumstance has obliterated her memory, nor altered the principles that have been handed down in sacred tradition through the various administrations since her demise.

Then, in the first Mistress of Novices there was a singularly privileged soul. Father Dupontavice called her the *Marie Eustelle* of Indiana, for "more reasons than one," and he continues:

"In the first glance at her likeness I found a striking resemblance to our dear Sister St. Francis, and in reading [the life of Mary Eustelle] there was something that reminded me of the precious letters I have received from her [Sister St. Francis]. In fine, her love for Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, her familiarity, her tender raptures, so like our own saint—it did me good to read all that, while I was humbled on account of my coldness. When I beheld how she left her heart

in the tabernacle, even in the ciborium, I put mine at the foot of the altar, even at the church door, and found it too well placed. I never read what our good Sister St. Francis read, namely, that Our Lord would feed us again in heaven with the consecrated Host; but I did read in the Book of the Elect by Father St. Jure that some ascetics thought that a consecrated Host would be preserved in heaven during all eternity, to perpetuate the infinite humiliation of the Word made flesh.

"The ascetics must be read with discretion and sobriety; they sometimes say very strange things. In my next letter I will tell you those [writers] I like best. I want theology, Scripture, and reason for foundation of all they say that is beautiful; nothing is really beautiful but truth; truth alone is amiable. I do not know Louis de Montfort's book (True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin), but I like books that are reasonable and shall be pleased to read it at your recommendation. . . . Sister St. Francis knows what is good; few have been favored with such heavenly gifts as she enjoys, in her humility as wholly unconscious of her privileges with Our Lord as of her rare virtues."

If God had chosen a saint for St.-Mary-of-the-Woods from the family of M. Le Fer de la Motte to lay the foundation of the religious spirit in the first novitiate, he selected another from the bosom of the same privileged family to continue the work begun by her holy sister. This was Elvire Le Fer de la Motte, who was given to Mother Theodore in 1852.

In points of character Elvire was the opposite of her sister Irma. Sister St. Francis, heroic in her love because of the perpetual joy and sweetness she dis-

covered in the caresses of her beloved Spouse, which caused her to breathe in the exultation of a triumphant and glorious atmosphere, seemed naturally disposed for a life of contemplation and unitive love. Sister M. Joseph was an ardent lover, enamoured of the cross of her Saviour, from the shadow of which she never departed. The gall and the vinegar had always been her portion; the sharp thorns and the crucifying nails were the pledges of her Beloved's good pleasure. Sympathy for His sufferings opened the well-springs of her magnanimous heart, and the stream of love that gushed forth was an inundation whose mighty tide rendered her the crucified bride of a crucified King. Irma gazed with eagle eye upon the radiance of the Godhead in the light of eternal splendor and glory; Elvire saw all things in the soft shaded light of the agonizing Redeemer and the Mother of Sorrows; yet no shade of sadness ever betrayed itself in Sister M. Joseph; on the contrary, her beaming countenance made one feel that "the Lamb on Calvary's mountain slain" was the Sun giving to her soul a perpetual joyance. Less favored, perhaps, humanly speaking (Irma had raptures in prayer and other unusual gifts) than her sister, her virtues were not less heroic; and her eminently practical mind, her ability both domestic and administrative, her musical talent, her beautiful voice, and all the other perfections of her superior intellect and beautiful soul made her, though in a vastly different way, the happy emulator of her saintly sister.

Mother Theodore, appreciating the new treasure that Providence had consigned to her keeping, began at once to prepare her for the service which she foresaw

Sister M. Joseph would one day render to the Community. She announces her arrival to Bishop Bouvier:

Perhaps you are aware that Our Lord has also called Mlle. Le Fer de la Motte to share in the labors of our great work. How I thank Him for having given this fine young person her beautiful religious vocation! And what joy for my heart and for Sister St. Francis to have her here at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods! . . . .

Mother Theodore then petitions the good Bishop to aid her by his prayers in directing this highly gifted soul, that her training may be such "as will enable her to fulfil the very special designs that Almighty God seems to have upon her, and for which she has all natural graces and a very good will."

That it was a great happiness for Sister St. Francis to have her sister share with her the privileges of her sublime vocation cannot be doubted; yet in no way would she influence her. Her indifference is evidenced in a letter to Elvire, who, after a long struggle in secret, makes a disclosure on the subject of vocation to her saintly sister Irma, being still undecided as to the Community she should prefer to enter. Sister St. Francis thus advises her:

After Communion, when in silence with Jesus alone, ask Him to make known what He desires you to do, and if He asks the sacrifice of all that you love tell Him to take your heart, if you have not the courage to give it to Him. I should be very sorry if you thought of coming to St. Mary's on my account. If God calls you to the holy vocation of the missions, you will find in Mother Theodore a guide and sincere friend; but neither for her nor for me should you make such a sacrifice. Never for

one moment have I repented leaving France; but I left for God, and I have found in this land the Saviour who called me.

In a letter to Bishop Bouvier Mother Theodore says:

I went to New York to meet our Bishop at his arrival; he brought us also a young English postulant, pious, amiable, and well informed; she will render us great service by teaching music.

The postulant here introduced to us became Sister Mary Eudoxie, whose long teaching career at the Academy is linked with the fond memories that twine around the early history of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, and whose declining years have been spent in collecting and translating materials for this volume.

A good musician was a great desideratum, as it had been necessary for some time to employ a secular professor at the Academy. Bishop St. Palais tells of the Community's need in this particular in a letter to Mlle. Le Fer de la Motte:

PARIS, Dec. 14, 1851.

If Rev. Father Kundek told you that I intended to return to Vincennes without visiting Saint-Servan, he certainly led you into error. He was not aware of my intentions. I was too well received by your good family, and too well treated in Brittany, to think of returning to the United States without going again to a province which has furnished so many subjects and given generous pecuniary assistance to my poor diocese. Besides, Sister St. Francis would never forgive me such negligence, and I know she is so *naughty* I should fear to incur her displeasure by the omission and give rise to a correspondence too piquant for me to meet. I cannot yet fix the date of my

return, but you may keep everything in readiness—objects, funds, good priests, good postulants for St. Mary's—I will take charge of all; but especially if you could find me a musician to replace the Sister who has died recently, I should be very grateful. Ask one for me of your holy patron, St. Cecilia. I could not give you a better address for obtaining what I desire.

I am in receipt of a letter from your dear sister; all is going on well at St. M——; the number of boarders is increasing. The poor Sisters stood greatly in need of this to enable them to get out of the miserable cabin in which they have been shut up for so many years.

Accept, Mademoiselle, the expression of the affectionate regards which I feel for the sister of one of my dearest and most devoted daughters.

✠ Maurice, Bp. of Vincennes.

The good Bishop's prayer was heard, as we have seen. He found moreover two Belgian candidates Sister St. Antoine and her sister who wished to devote themselves to the care of his orphans. Ruillé-sur-Loir was to be the place of meeting for all, whence the Bishop would accompany them to Indiana upon his return from Rome. Mother Theodore, hearing that they were all at Ruillé awaiting Bishop St. Palais, wrote to them:

We have learned with joy that you are at Ruillé, far from all who are dear to you in the world, already on the way to follow your beautiful, your sublime vocation. We earnestly beg of Our Lord to complete what He has begun in your regard. He will hear our prayer, for He loves you. He calls you not only to become His faithful spouses, but to be, in a certain respect, true apostles; not only to leave for His sake all who are dear to you in your family,

but even to leave your country in order that you may have nothing but yourself. He calls you to this land watered by the sweat and blood of so many holy missionaries who have come here before us to make known, loved, and served that God who has chosen you.

You must understand, my dear young ladies, that in order to arrive at the perfection to which you are called a solid foundation is required. One cannot belong to God in an imperfect manner and be happy here. The life of the world that surrounds us is a life of the senses, a mundane and sensual life. Its example is very dangerous. If we do not wish to be lost with it, but to save it without injury to ourselves, we must be very firm, very devoted to God. Think of this while it is yet time. If your hearts waver, if you are afraid of the cross, of poverty, of humiliations, do not leave France; you would not be suitable for our little Community. If, on the contrary, you are determined to belong entirely to God, to endeavor by His grace to become humble, pious, and, above all, to renounce your own will by obedience, then come. Our blessed Lord will assist you and protect you. He will be your guide in your long and painful voyage, He will bring you to our beloved forests, where you will find Sisters who love you even now and who pray for you. You will also find in your new country souls who love not, who know not God; but these whom you will instruct and direct in His service will be your crown in eternity. And you, dear M——, who have had the courage to bid adieu to a beloved mother, take your heart in your hands and offer it to God. He is so generous that He will reward you abundantly for what He enables you to do for Him. Oh! how much you will love Him in this blessed solitude if you continue to be entirely devoted to Him.

There was yet another recruit from France to the

diocese of Vincennes. The following year Mother Theodore had the consolation of welcoming to the Congregation she had established, her niece from Ruillé-sur-Loir. In honor of her aunt, this candidate had been given the name, Sister Mary Theodore, and a long life of labor and devotedness is the record borne by her who was the last link between Ruillé and St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. The last years of her life were filled with excruciating suffering, and it was with the greatest difficulty, and only on crutches, that she could move from her room; but she bore all with her wonted fortitude and jovial spirits, and when the end came, on the 19th of November, 1902, it was peaceful and without pain.

It would seem that after her coming to St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, the New World must supply the ranks of the apostolic army in the woodlands. Whether others were intimidated by the recital of the difficulties met with in the new foundation, or whether ties of kinship and country bound their hearts too closely, we cannot say; but St. Mary's owes to Ruillé only eight of its members—the first six, Sister St. Francis Xavier, and Sister Mary Theodore.

If France had no more subjects for St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, other countries would give aid to the diocese of Vincennes. Mother Theodore's letter of April, 1853, tells Bishop Bouvier that she delights in seeing another religious order enter into the same field of labor, "which is vast enough for many more," she says.

We have a Community of Benedictine Monks settling in our forests; four of them have arrived. They will do much good here, especially among the Germans, who are

very numerous. . . . These Fathers came from the Abbey of Einsiedeln. They find that Indiana reminds them of Switzerland, our people having the simplicity of its inhabitants.

In regard to this new religious foundation the Benedictine *Chronicles* state that one hundred and sixty acres of land, on which was a log house, were bought by the pioneer Fathers on the 12th of August, 1853, in Spencer County, Harrison Township; and that a daughter of Henry Denning, renowned for her piety and great virtue, and who afterwards became a Sister of Providence at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, saw a white cloth spread on this ground, and on the cloth an altar. She heard repeatedly, day and night, the voices of persons singing psalms and sacred canticles. No one paid attention to her revelations until it became known that the Benedictines had bought the ground. "And," the *Chronicles* add, "Providence seems thus to have selected the spot where the new monastery was to be erected."

This Mary Katherine Denning was known in religion as Sister St. Ange. She became professed in 1853 and died July 15, 1870. In giving her the name, Mother Theodore remarked: "We call her an Angel, but she will belong to the highest choir." It is probably to members like her that Mother Theodore refers, when she says to Bishop Bouvier:

I beseech you, my good Father, to vouchsafe me the assistance of your fervent prayers, that I may have light and grace to direct those whom divine Providence has sent to us. There are some very favored souls among them, some to whom our beloved Spouse reveals Himself

in a most especial manner. They are distinguished from the others only by their deeper humility and recollection outwardly, but they have attained to high interior perfection and intimate union with Our Lord. I am humiliated in seeing the great strides they make in the path of sanctity in so short a time, while I continue to hobble along slowly and painfully. I bless the Lord for granting these favors to the Community, and the tender interest you have always manifested for our poor dear little Congregation makes me desirous to communicate this to you in all simplicity, that you may share in our joy and help us to thank our good God.

To one of the Sisters on a mission Mother Theodore writes:

All that you tell me concerning our dear Sister is very consoling. Oh! that there were many a St. Ange amongst us! We can all learn beautiful lessons from her humble simplicity and devotedness; but her example shines forth most resplendently in holy obedience. Be sure, my dear N——, there is no other way to heaven, no other path that will lead us in safety to where we all hope one day to meet, never to be separated. The obedient man will speak of victories, the holy book tells us. And again, The arm of the Lord is not shortened; if the duty seems above our strength, let us take courage from these inspired words. I grant it is extremely difficult to yield when our judgment points out a better way; but just here, my daughter, is where *perfect* obedience can be practised. When we obey in matters that seem reasonable we cannot be said to be practising much virtue; we are following our own lights; but when we obey contrary to all our natural inclinations and the dictates of reason—ah! there is where virtue comes in. And this is only what we have bound ourselves to in taking our vows. Let these few

words sink deep into your heart, that you also may speak of many victories.

The Community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods had long since outgrown its accommodations at "Little Providence." Additions had been made from time to time to the Academy building, which contributed somewhat to the convenience of the pupils; but the novices and the Sisters retained at the Mother House found themselves in insufferable quarters. A new house was an urgent necessity, and it was to consider plans and specifications with architects in the East, that Mother Theodore went to New York to meet Bishop St. Palais upon his return from Rome.

The first item in Mother Theodore's diary in this connection reads: "*Saturday.*—We have made our first contract for our future Mother House. My God, permit it to remain in nothingness rather than that it should ever be profaned by one mortal sin. O Mary, take it under thy protection! *For Thou, O Lord, hast revealed to the ear of Thy servant that Thou wilt build him a house; and therefore Thy servant hath found confidence to pray to Thee!*—I. Paral. xvii, 25."

One year later we read in the same diary: "July 20, 1853. To-day they place the cross on the house. It is gilded, as is also the globe beneath it. The world was saved by the cross. How consoling to the Christian heart to see it raised up in the New World! My God, grant that it may triumph!"

The same month Mother Theodore had the happiness of announcing to the Sisters that their new home had progressed sufficiently to receive them under its roof.

Addressing a circular letter to the various missions, she says:

Beloved Sisters:

It is with deepest sentiments of joy and gratitude that we call you once more to your cherished home after a year of labor and trials. By the sweet providence of God and the union that reigns among you, a house is ready to receive you. As yet it has only the walls and roof with scarcely any furniture; but such as it is, you will be happy, for it is the fruit of your labors and privations. How true it is that charity edifieth! May the Sisters of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods never forget this. When we compare the little frame house in which we were received, through charity, twelve years ago with the splendid building erected here now, we clearly see the effect of these beautiful words, *Increase and multiply.* We have indeed increased and multiplied; our exterior improvements are astonishing; but does our interior advancement correspond? Have we increased in humility, mortification, self-denial, and all the other virtues which constitute a good Religious? It is in the silence of the retreat that we shall be able to answer all these questions. Come, then, my dear children, to refresh your souls alone with your God; come to purify your hearts in order to work at your perfection with more zeal and fervor. Our chapel will be blessed by the Bishop on the 6th of August. I hope to see you all there for the solemnity. May your guardian angels preserve you from all harm and bring you safe in soul and body to the arms and the heart of

Your truly devoted

Sister Theodore.

On the day of the Transfiguration, August 6th, they move into their new house, she tells us; and her prayer

that day is: "My God grant that we may be new creatures in Thy new dwelling which Thou dost vouchsafe to share with us. What love, my God, what love! *Saturday.*—Glory to the cross! Honor to Mary!"

September 29th she writes: "They finish painting the front of the house to-day and hang up the shutters, which are of a clear green color and suit well the pale gray of the brick. How beautiful the house is! My God, grant that Thou mayest be well served here!"

On the 17th of October her diary entry is another prayer: "Grant, O my God, that all who dwell in this house may love Thee much, may love one another, and may never forget why they came here. Grant that all who shall dwell in this house may be one day united in heaven!"

The Community at this period of its existence numbered eighty-eight members, including sixteen postulants. Upwards of one thousand pupils were under their tutorship in the various establishments, besides eighty-five boarders at the Academy. The progress of the past years warranted the hope of further increase, so it was necessary to build rather for the future than for the present needs. The large three-story edifice had a noble appearance, and would be considered perfectly suitable, with some additions, even at the present time.

In one of her letters Mother Theodore expresses some anxiety about the building: "I find our house too fine; it gives me great uneasiness," she says, "regarding our vow of poverty. It looks more like a castle than like the dwelling of poor little Sisters of Providence. I think it might have been built cheaper and less elegant. I

wanted only simplicity and something solid, and in spite of myself elegance has come in, I do not know how. How unhappy I should be if, through my example, extravagance were to be introduced among us! . . . We have the consolation of seeing our blessed Lord more suitably placed. The chapel is pretty and very well ornamented for the country; this does not give me any scruple like the rest. Our house, including the chapel, will cost about fifteen thousand dollars, of which two-thirds is paid."

It was through the generosity of the Le Fer family in France and also through the unfailing kindness of Madame Parmentier in New York, Mother Theodore's dearest friends, that the chapel was provided for so handsomely. Altar linen, candlesticks, vases, vestments, and especially a handsome ostensorium, constituted the gifts of these pious and devoted friends.

The uneasiness of the foundress about the building, which she feared was too handsome, was removed by the decision of the Bishop, who contended that the requirements of the age left no margin for scruple on that score. It was only adapted to the progress of the order and could not be an infringement of the vow of poverty.

The last item of Mother Theodore's diary referring to the new building is dated April 7th and reads as follows: "On this day, the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin, the room of the Superior General is occupied for the first time. Grant, O my God, that all those who shall dwell in it may be animated always by Thy spirit, be devoted to the Mother of sorrows, and die in Thy love. Amen! Amen!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

MOTHER THEODORE IS PERSUADED TO ASSUME CHARGE OF THE DIOCESAN ASYLUM FOR BOYS.—THE CHOLERA IN INDIANA.—SISTER ST. LAWRENCE FALLS A VICTIM. — FIRST RAILROAD THROUGH ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS. — FATHER CORBE'S CHARITY TO ST. MARY'S VILLAGE.—SUDDEN CURE OF SISTER ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.—MOTHER THEODORE AND SISTER ST. FRANCIS MIRACULOUSLY ESCAPE DEATH BY ACCIDENT.—PUBLIC COMMENDATION OF THE INSTITUTION OF ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS.

As early as the year 1849 Mother Theodore had assumed charge of the Orphan Asylum for Girls at Vincennes; this was at the beginning of Bishop St. Palais' administration, although all the arrangements had been made by the lamented Bishop Bazin. The services of the Sisters for this institution were given gratis by Mother Theodore, who wished to contribute as much as lay in her power to the advancement of the diocese and the needs of the Church.

Those homeless children were the objects of the bishop's most tender solicitude, and in Mother Theodore he found, not only a ready, but an enthusiastic co-operatrix. It did not appear practicable for the Sisters to take charge of the homeless boys at this period; so the Bishop confided them to the care of some pious secular persons. One year's trial proved the futility of this

arrangement. Mother Theodore was then pressed to extend her care to the abandoned little boys. She wrote on the subject to Bishop Bouvier:

Bishop St. Palais is ever good to us; his beneficence reminds us of the interest you take in Ruillé. Like yourself, he is a most devoted father to our Congregation. At this writing he is having the Girls' Orphanage repaired; the Boys' Asylum will be ready in a few weeks. His Lordship hopes to install us in charge of the latter also; but I shrink from assuming the responsibility of bringing up boys. I fear we shall not succeed. It is much to be regretted that Father Sorin cannot give Brothers for this work. There are at present forty-seven girls and thirty-two boys. We cannot refuse his Lordship, he has done us so much good; but I fear very much that we are not fitted for the work; however, we will do our best. My Lord, we pray you, beseech the Father of mercies, the Father of the fatherless, to bless our endeavors.

Sister Joachim was placed in charge of this institution, which position she held for twenty-four years. Discovering then that the good people of Vincennes were planning to celebrate her silver jubilee anniversary with demonstrations that her modesty could not relish, she importuned her Superiors to relieve her of this charge. Her wishes were respected and she remained at the Mother House the following year, much to the disappointment of all her friends at Vincennes. The next year, however, she returned to the dear old post, where she remained until age and its attendant infirmities compelled her to retire to the Mother House to await the reward from the Master,

who has said: *Because you have done it to the least of these, My little ones, you have done it unto Me.*

Father Sorin's inability to accept the charge of the orphan boys of the diocese arose, in the first instance, from the loss his young Community sustained from the cholera, which ravaged the country for three successive seasons. After losing thirty subjects he wrote to Mother Theodore:

NOTRE DAME DU LAC UNIVERSITY, IND.

Having learned that you were ill, I begged Father Granger to write you a week ago, as I had no leisure then at my disposal. To-day he tells me it was to Father Corbe he wrote. A second letter from St.-Mary-of-the-Woods now informs us of the great charity of your dear Sisters towards us, and of the illness of their venerated Mother. I wish to say that I am not insensible to either. To-morrow I shall say Mass for you and your Sisters. Since you began to pray for us death has ceased its awful work, if the disease has not been entirely arrested. Two Sisters whom we expected to die have returned from the portals of the tomb. There is no one dangerously sick now except one Brother, whom I particularly recommend to your prayers.

I am far from wishing you a visitation such as Providence has sent us. Assuredly I adore the designs of God, of which I understand neither the purpose nor the cause. Oh, no; not for all the world would I murmur against Heaven. God takes back what He has lent. I can only bow my head and be silent. But I fear to have lost all the merit of those days of anguish; I was not at all prepared for them. The day I saw that Father Cointet was also going to die, I became almost distracted. I cannot yet believe that he is dead. Ah! why did I not go instead? The void that he leaves becomes daily more frightful. Pardon me,

dear Mother, tears blind me. Pray for him and for the other dear departed ones, and do not forget

Your humble and afflicted friend in J. M. J.,

E. Sorin.

October 16, 1854.

God spared the Sisters of Providence this great affliction, although He demanded one victim. After taking care of cholera patients at Fort Wayne for the third time, Sister Lawrence was seized with the same dread malady and was carried off in a few hours. On this occasion Father Julian Benoit thus addressed Mother Theodore:

You must have received to-day the sad tidings of the death of your excellent and beloved Sister Lawrence. I know how much this loss will pain your maternal heart; but, despite your tears, how many motives of consolation and of rejoicing you have! A victim of zeal and charity, her death was a real martyrdom. And her life! Have you ever seen a person more truly upright, more sincerely pious, more exact in fulfilling her duties? Her last moments were like the evening of a beautiful day. "I do not fear death," she said to me often; "hell inspires me with no terror; only I tremble lest my many imperfections should detain me a long time in purgatory. I am happy to die a Sister of Providence. The Community will pray for me; tell this expressly to Mother. I have nothing to regret in life—nothing—nothing." "And Mother Theodore?" I said. "I loved her much, I love her still, but I cannot be of any use to her any more. . . . Do you think, Father, that I shall remain very long in purgatory?" she asked. "No, my child; the death to which you so willingly and cheerfully exposed yourself might alone efface the greatest number of sins. . . . Besides, I am in your

debt; you have worked for my sick and prayed so much for me, and you will continue to pray for me in heaven. I will say fifty Masses for you." "Thank you, Father, a thousand times, good Father—good to the end." These were the last words I heard from her lips. Called to baptize a child and hear some confessions, I went to the church, and returned only in time to receive her last sigh. I had administered her before going. At my return, when reciting the sublime *Proficiscere anima Christiana,* her good and beautiful soul took its flight, I have not the shadow of a doubt, to heaven. Oh, were I as well prepared as this good Sister!

A later letter from the same writer says:

You may well be proud of your dear daughters, my good Mother, and you may depend on it, as long as they shall be animated by the same spirit, hell may be stirred up, but it shall not prevail against them.

Mother Theodore's tender heart felt keenly the loss of this dear daughter, particularly as she was deprived of seeing her and of speaking words of consolation to the dying Sister. Still, with characteristic courage and resignation to the adorable will of God, Mother Theodore exclaimed, after reading the telegram announcing Sister Lawrence's death: "God be blessed, we now have a martyr of charity!"

To the Sister who was with her at Fort Wayne at the time of her death, Mother Theodore wrote:

Our grief at the sudden departure to a better world of dear Sister Lawrence is deep indeed. But it is a sweet thought to have the confidence that our beloved Sister is now wearing the martyr's crown and carrying the palm of victory. . . . My dear child, how sweetly tender is the

Providence that watches over our poor little flock! Our Litany is very consoling. I repeat its invocations over and over. Dwell on them also and ponder them, and I have no doubt that you too will feel greatly consoled. . . . I have invoked our martyr to-day. She will aid us more, now that she is in the court of the King, than she could ever have done on earth. Father Benoit has paid her a most beautiful tribute. Yes, she was truly "upright, sincere, loving, and self-sacrificing," and now she has her reward. Let us beseech Our Lord to send us more good subjects to carry on His work—yes, it is all His work. May His holy name be forever praised and blessed!

Mother Theodore now finds a new reason for feeling that divine Providence is peculiarly tender in its care of her Congregation. She notes in her diary: "We have just learned that Bishop St. Palais has refused the Archbishopric of Toulouse.[1] My God, how good Thou art to preserve him to Vincennes!

Another kind dispensation that gave her great joy was the arrival of the portrait of the first founder, Father Dujarié. Sister St. Eloi, Superior of the house at Montauban, France, announces it:

I suppose you have now the lithograph of Father Dujarié. You will venerate it more and more when you learn that a person, with whom you are well acquainted, has assured me that she has obtained extraordinary graces through prayers and novenas in honor of this worthy Father.

Are we surprised? Not when we recall that the holy founder had been ordained in a barn during the

[1] See History of the Diocese of Vincennes, by Rt. Rev. H. Alerding, Chapter XVII.

great French Revolution; that he said his first Mass in a cellar, and for years passed among his flock in disguise, ministering to the needs of the poor; often sleeping in garrets or haymows; fasting whole days at a time; stripping himself of his patrimony and living only on charity; spending his days in labors and perils, his nights in watching and prayer. This is the chivalry of the saints. Can we doubt his intercessory power with God, since he is gone to share the glory of the Master for whom his life was a holocaust?

A very important item in the history of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods now appears in the diary:

"*October* 8, 1854.—The silence of our forests, which from the beginning of the world had not been broken, save by the warbling of the birds and the cries of native animals, was disturbed last night by the whistling and puffing of the steam-engine. The cars can now go as far as Paris, Ill."

With the advent of steam-power great changes were effected at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. The countless inconveniences that resulted from its isolation were no longer a barrier to its rapid development. Patrons from great distances brought their daughters to the Academy, especially during the Civil War period, at which time the buildings were taxed to their utmost capacity. Some of the rooms at the convent had to be given as dormitories for the pupils.

For a long time it had been Father Corbe's desire to visit once more his native land, for which purpose he had been setting aside whatever he could spare to enable him to make the journey. As he had now amassed enough to meet the expenses of the travel, his

desire was about to be gratified; for, since Bishop St. Palais' accession to the see of Vincennes, the Congregation at St. Mary's had enjoyed unbroken peace and prosperity; it was possible, therefore, to leave it for a time and to take the much-desired, the much-needed rest. Father Corbe had always been a very busy man, owing to the important positions he held at various times —Superior of the Seminary and rector of the cathedral before his appointment to St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, theologian to Bishop St. Palais at the Seventh Council of Baltimore, and administrator of the diocese during the time that the Bishop made his official visits to Rome.

These various relations entailed upon him a vast correspondence. Much time was necessarily consumed, besides, in entertaining visitors who came to consult him, for Father Corbe's hospitality was known far and near. Undoubtedly to these visits is due the wide acquaintance St. Mary's possessed among ecclesiastical circles. There was scarcely a prelate of the West who had not met Mother Theodore: diary entries and innumerable letters testify to this fact. Of Father Corbe's intended trip we shall let the pen of the foundress tell: "Our Good Rev. Superior had economized a little each year, so as to be able to visit again his dear Brittany; but the wretched condition of his little church at St. Mary's village had made him come to the conclusion of employing his savings to repair it. Formerly Father Corbe's parlor could contain the entire congregation; to-day his church can seat four hundred and it is still too small." So we see that St. Mary's village owes much to the sacrificing zeal and devotedness of Father Corbe, whom to name is to bless, for this is but one instance

out of many in which the needy were aided by his charities.

The thread of the narrative has carried us several years in advance of some events that must not be omitted. The first takes us back to the year 1849, to the painful hour when Bishop Bazin was so suddenly taken away from his flock. Mother Theodore writes at this time to Madame Le Fer de la Motte that she had also feared her cherished Irma (Sister St. Francis) was going to leave this world, but that she had returned from the verge of the grave in a manner quite miraculous. She leaves to her daughter the pleasure of giving the details of her cure. Having spoken of the malady that brought her to death's door, inflammation of the lungs, and the first stages of her illness, Sister St. Francis adds:

I was still more oppressed when Mother came to me again. She told me that during Mass she remembered that we had some water of La Salette sent by M. Dupont. I assured her that I should be cured and asked her what kind of a cure she wished me to obtain. She replied, "A gradual cure." I should have preferred for the honor of the Blessed Virgin to be cured suddenly; and if Mother Theodore had desired it I am sure the Blessed Virgin would have granted it. But as it was for my dear Community, and principally for my good Superior, that I rejoiced to live, I wished to follow her will. Scarcely had I swallowed the miraculous water than a happy reaction took place in me. I asked for something to eat. All the Sisters came to embrace me, and there were tears of joy instead of the tears of sorrow which they had been shedding. The next morning I received Holy Communion; since then I am well.

Mother Theodore regretted later that she had not permitted Sister St. Francis to ask for an instantaneous cure. "When she proposed it," wrote Mother Theodore, "I was so impressed with the thought that God was going to hear her prayer, and that in a moment before my eyes she would, if I may say so, pass from death to life, that I had not the courage to allow her."

The next remarkable event to which reference must be made is also recorded by Sister St. Francis. Writing to her own mother she says:

Let us bless the Lord for all His benefits!

MY CHERISHED MOTHER:

*Out of the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord!* Mother Theodore and I had just lighted on this passage in our Office. The evening was calm, the moonbeams glittered through the branches of the tall trees in our forest. The carriage in which we were was crossing the first bridge coming from Terre Haute when I noticed that the horse was backing. I jumped out at once and saw that only a few inches of plank separated the wheels of the carriage from the ravine below. "Mother, Mother," I screamed, "jump out!" She tried to do so, but it was too late. In a moment carriage, horse, Mother—all had disappeared over the precipice, and I was alone on the bridge crying "O Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist save our Mother!" Descending the bank I saw the horse on his back, the carriage overturned, and between the wheels and the horse's feet our poor Mother's head. But she was still alive, and bade me call for help. Though I looked for assistance only from Heaven I ran shouting. A young man I had not seen before was passing in a wagon. He came at once, though the time seemed very long. One movement of the horse would have killed Mother.

When she was rescued how I thanked God, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph! Mother was as composed as if she were coming from the chapel, and it was not till after some time that she felt any emotion. . . . Will you kindly have a Mass said in thanksgiving, either at Loretto or at Nazareth, in remembrance of Our Lord's protection? You would shudder could you see the spot where this distressing, yet consoling, accident occurred. I shall not attempt to describe the bridge, which has no parapet, etc., but those who next day saw the wreck of our carriage could not understand how Mother was not killed falling from such a height. If when tempted I should pray as I did then, never should I sin.

There were many such subjects of rejoicing and special thanksgivings; to these may be added the progress of God's work in the schools, and particularly at the Academy. The beauties of our holy religion were strongly attracting many hearts; God's love was beginning to reign where the world and passion had formerly held court; boldness and indifference were giving place to respect and fervor; in a word, God's love was transforming hearts and making them worthy of His kingdom. All this was most comforting to the heart of the servant of God, many of whose letters detail the progress she had the satisfaction to witness, and which, no doubt, was due to her master-mind and her holiness; although in her humility she says she has no part whatever in the work; that, after the blessing of God, all is due to the self-sacrificing spirit of the Sisters, whose prayerfulness and devotedness is her constant edification and a subject of her continual thanksgiving. Appreciation was not confined to the

Mother Superior; great encouragement was given by the kind words of the clergy whose schools were taught by Mother Theodore's spiritual daughters; and public sentiment in general seems to have expressed the same appreciation. This we infer from the subjoined notice which appeared in a Terre Haute paper, probably in the year 1854 or 1855:

ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS ACADEMY.

The exhibition and distribution of premiums took place at this institution on last Tuesday [August 2d] in the presence of a large and highly respectable assemblage of parents and other citizens.

There were public exercises in music, botany, physics, and other branches of study, and in each of them there was one sentiment among the audience—that the pupils acquitted themselves in the handsomest manner possible. The compositions and readings in French, German, and English are worthy of particular note. Some of the finest specimens of drawing we have seen anywhere were displayed, and the same commendation is due to the painting, penmanship, and all the rich varieties of needlework which greeted the eyes of the visitors.

The success of this institution in music is certainly worthy of special notice, not that the other branches are not cultivated with the most perfect success, but because this branch is so attractive in its nature and its cultivation so much and so properly insisted upon in every part of the country. Indeed everything demonstrated that this institution is in the very first class of educational establishments.

Under the care of the amiable, accomplished, talented and devoted Superior, and her assistants, it could not well be otherwise, especially in that sweet retired spot where every disturbing influence seems to be extracted and ex-

cluded. It is therefore not surprising that the institution has been planted upon the most solid foundation and is, each successive year, rapidly increasing the list of its patrons.

As we are fully satisfied with the high merit of St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, so we are proud that this ornament of our State is continually receiving increased manifestations of the public appreciation.

"Providence of God, worthy distributor of graces!" [1] Heaven's blessing rested upon the labors of those pioneer educators in the heart of Indiana's forests, for there was a power beneath the work in her who was the invigorating spirit, the leader, and whose daily life bespoke her wise and holy intent—*For them do I sanctify myself: that they also may be sanctified in truth.*[2]

They in turn profited by the counsels that fell so often from her lips. Multiplied labors, she taught, need not draw them from God. Retirement and prayer are more than ever necessary when there are great things to be done for God. "My children," she would often say, "go not into the world; have nothing to do with its gossip, its seeming grandeur and the social questions that agitate the masses. But, my daughters, bring the world to you by your goodness, an exhortation more persuasive than eloquence. Attract it by the example of a truly Christian life, a life in conformity with the evangelical counsels; and then by your contact with those children who in later years must needs mingle in the world you will elevate their tastes and teach them to harmonize conflicting

[1] Litany of Providence. [2] John xvii. 19.

opinions, and to reduce to practice the Gospel precepts by which means alone tranquillity is preserved in the family and union secured among nations. Do this and the work entrusted to you will continue a subject of rejoicing for angels and men."

The conversion of sinners, an object always most forcibly attractive to a truly zealous spirit, was the chief desire of Mother Theodore's heart. When success crowned her efforts or those of her colleagues, no words could express her sentiments of joy and thanksgiving. Yet how long this satisfaction was denied! One of her letters to Bishop Bouvier tells of the first-fruits of their prayers and works in this particular.

After six years of waiting, hoping, and praying, we have at last had the consolation of seeing one of our pupils embrace the faith. . . . So many have come to us without any religion at all, and though they leave greatly enlightened and with very good sentiments, they have not the courage of their convictions; others more courageous meet with innumerable trials and temptations when they try to follow the dictates of their conscience. A few persevere, the majority are weak; and so the work is left incomplete, no doubt because of our unworthiness. Be pleased to assist us, my Lord, by your prayers, that, working more earnestly at our own perfection, we may become fit instruments in the hands of God for His great work.

If consolation was long withheld at the beginning, it was granted more frequently in later years. The diary makes occasional mention of an abjuration having taken place in the chapel; but Pentecost of 1852 brought the greatest triumph, when five of the

pupils received their first Holy Communion, having been baptized on the previous evening. "My heart cannot contain its joy. O Jesus, O Mary! Tears blind me; I must cease writing and go again to pour out my thanks at the feet of Him to whom be all honor and glory." Thus ends her letter.

A few years later Mother Theodore had the happiness of receiving two of these privileged five into the ranks of her spiritual daughters; she gave the holy habit to Sister Mary Ursula on the Feast of the Assumption in 1855, and admitted Sister Mary John to the novitiate in the following January.

## CHAPTER XXX.

SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES.—LETTERS OF DIRECTION.—COUNSELS AND ADMONITIONS GIVEN BY MOTHER THEODORE.

Although abundant use has been made of letters that reveal Mother Theodore's beautiful soul, there is another way in which her spirit manifests itself yet more completely; that is, in her conferences, words of advice given "in season and out of season," counsels uttered or penned, as circumstances demanded. They cannot be arranged in any particular order, or in reference to any period of her life; they are simply gems picked up here and there along the wayside of our narrative, and have an intrinsic worth rather than any value of association. As the product of her wisdom and holiness, they might, not inappropriately, be called the fruits of her spirit.

Like the beloved Disciple whose unceasing admonition was *My little children, love one another*, charity was her favorite theme; for, with all the great doctors of the Church, she considered it the virtue in which all perfection is realized. According to St. Francis de Sales, "salvation and eternal bliss are shown to faith, prepared for hope, but only bestowed on charity. Faith enlightens our path: it is both the mysterious cloud by day and the bright pillar of fire by night,

being at the same time obscure and brilliant. Hope feeds us with its sweets like the manna, but to charity alone it belongs to introduce us into the hallowed land."

If Mother Theodore did not always begin her daily conference with charity, she never finished a discourse without some allusion to the Queen of virtues. "Oh, if all but understood the power of that one word, charity," she said; "how it unites and binds and welds together! My duties have obliged me to travel much in both continents. I have seen many Religious of different orders and I am more and more convinced that without charity we are, as St. Paul says, only sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Let us never cease endeavoring to impress this lesson on our pupils; it is not exclusively a cloistral virtue, it is necessary for all who would be saved. Teach them in what charity consists. Is it in the occasional giving of an alms? That is something, but not everything. Is it charity to refrain from conversation injurious to our neighbor? Certainly, and that is an obligation; but what about thoughts and judgments? Ah! the Spouse in the Canticles tells us: *He hath set in order charity in me.*

"Charity when perfect will set in order, will regulate our thoughts and judgments, so that never will we sound a discordant note in our own minds, nor will we intentionally touch a chord in the minds of others that will vibrate a dissonance."

If she heard of any annoyance that seemed calculated to provoke complaint she would say: "It is our inability to go further than the surface that causes us to be so

faultfinding, so unwilling to bear with the imperfections of our neighbor."

Absence of formality gave a charm to Mother Theodore's counsels that insured for them a readier acceptance than any studied discourse could have done; besides her regular instructions, properly so called, every duty was an opportunity to her for imparting a lesson, which places in evidence her constant zeal and proves, as the Rule enjoins, that her thoughts were in heaven.

The various feasts that holy Church was celebrating always called forth an appropriate thought, and sometimes a spark of humor escaped with it. For instance, on one St. Joseph's feast, the 19th of March, she said: "To-day in making my meditation on these words in the Litany of St. Joseph—O thou who art the perfect man who never sinned in words—I thought that were a litany to be composed by which to invoke us after our death, there would be very few among us to whom this praise could be addressed. Oh, how good a thing is silence. It is a sovereign remedy for nearly every kind of evil and the means to acquire a great many virtues, because, if we observe silence well we shall be recollected, we shall think of God, and we shall make our meditations with facility. Who among us ever repented having kept silence if it was not done through ill humor? In many words sin shall not be wanting, says the Scripture."

Before proceeding further we wish to repeat what was said in a former chapter, that the foundation principle of Mother Theodore's spirituality was her sublime faith. Her instructions always began by inculcating this principle; in fact, the spiritual edifice must have this

foundation, on which charity builds and completes its works. Every page of her life reveals this doctrine in practice. It was the basis of all her exhortations, verbal or epistolary, and there was scarcely an utterance that did not suggest this fundamental idea. In one letter she says: "If I should ask you, Do you believe such or such article of the Creed? you would answer me, 'Certainly, I believe it.' You would say that you believe all that Jesus Christ has said and that the Church teaches. But, my dear N——, how great a difference there is between believing and believing, between a dead faith and a living faith. The demons believe and tremble; the just believe and practice accordingly. It is true that you have practical faith since every day you do many good works; but how do you perform them? What is the spirit that animates you? The spirit of faith consists in doing our actions for God and in His presence; in considering all the events of life as directed by Him; in regarding Superiors as the means for declaring His will. One day we shall be judged and each of us shall have a different judgment. What will constitute the difference? We all rise at the same hour, assist at the same office, partake of the same sacraments; we have our repasts and recreations together; perhaps we have the same kind of work during the day; however, the one will sanctify her soul, the other may lose it. Yes, and the thought makes us shudder; we shall lose our souls if we do not act according to the spirit of faith; for what can we hope for after death if during life we have sought self and not God? After a certain number of graces God may withdraw Himself, and then comes the accom-

plishment of those terrible words: *You shall seek Me and you shall not find Me.* Some souls will hear this terrible condemnation because they fled from Him when He sought them. O my God! preserve us from this misfortune! We shall be preserved from it if we act through supernatural motives; if we direct all our intentions to God. 'One to One' always, as Brother Giles used to say; 'God and my soul only.' There is in the atmosphere of our times a vapor of infidelity; we breathe indifference among the people; in spite of ourselves we are surrounded by a tainted atmosphere. If we do not take great care our faith will become weakened by degrees. Ask yourself, my dear child, if you have the same vigor to-day as when you left all things to consecrate yourself to God; if you believe firmly and practically that unless you carry the cross you cannot be a disciple of Jesus. Let us now reanimate our faith; for faith, like love, becomes extinguished unless it is fed. Venial faults weaken it, while, on the contrary, each act of virtue increases it.

"Strong faith is characteristic of the saints. The just man lives by faith; every act of obedience is an act of faith, and, in fact, the same might be said of all the other virtues.

"Besides trying to strengthen in ourselves this spirit of strong faith, let us often thank God for having called us to the true Church, the custodian of faith, and fear nothing so much as to diminish in ourselves this precious gift. On our faith depends our charity; if the former is weak, the latter will be cold."

The joyous Christmastide brought from her pen many touching lessons to all her daughters assigned

to the labors of the missions. She invited them on this most happy day to the cave of Bethlehem, where, from the divine Child, from Mary and Joseph, they would learn poverty, patience in suffering, love. And when the 2d of February, the Feast of the Purification, presented in liturgical ceremony its threefold celebration, it was not to be passed without comment. "What shall we offer to-day in union with Jesus?" was her early morning question. "We have given all our exterior goods by the vow of poverty; all the pleasures of sense by the vow of chastity; and our liberty by the vow of obedience: what then can we offer? Ah! there remains something else which is not expressed in the formula of our sacred engagements and which, perhaps, we have not yet given to God, some other goods which I will call *future events*. For example, we will give to God our choice of the kind of death we shall have; our desires for certain employments; our reputation; our health—to be sick or well, useful or useless, it will be equally indifferent to us, as it will be also to have consolation or aridity in our prayers, repose or temptations; all we shall leave sweetly to the providence of God. This will be our offering. Perfect abandonment of ourselves in all things for the future requires great courage, and there are few persons who arrive at that perfection; but we ought to aspire to it. Try, then, to-day to deliver into the hands of our sweet Jesus all the care of the future, as well as all anxiety about the past. Make the offering in union with the ever-blessed Virgin Mother, offering her Child in the temple to be the redemption of Israel; and be assured that in leaving the past to the mercy of God and the future to His

providence, you will derive from your offering very great peace and very great consolation."

To encourage souls in the difficult ways of virtue was one of Mother Theodore's dearest arts. Young people are often apt to be discouraged at their faults. She tells them what their conduct should be after their failures: "We read in Holy Writ, my dear Sisters, that as long as we are upon earth we journey away from the Lord! Alas! we realize this truth only too well. Yes, as long as we live we shall commit faults; this is our daily experience; but what we have to do is to repair them as well as we are able, and when we try to do this Our Lord is sometimes more pleased with the reparation than He was displeased at the offence. Do not be vexed with yourselves when you have done wrong; that is an effect of pride; but humble yourselves before God and say to Him: If Thou hadst not upheld me I should have done worse."

One who was vacillating in her vocation hears these words: "Some try to persuade themselves that they could serve God in the world with more fervor and merit. It may be that they would serve Him with more natural satisfaction, because in a way more to their tastes; but with more merit, that is not true. What is it that renders our actions meritorious? Is it their great number, their diversity, their splendor? No; it is their dependence on the will of God. *I hate your fasts*, saith the Lord; *I listen not to your prayers even in the days of your affliction, because I have found your own will*. . . . Why does God hate the fasts and prayers of His people? Because His glory was not their object. You know by experience when you ardently desire to

do something, a thing in itself very fatiguing perhaps, it does not seem difficult and you would suffer more in being prevented than in doing it. It is a great mistake to think that in the world you would know the maxims of the Gospel better than in religion. The people of the world, even the good, with few exceptions, desire only their comfort and satisfaction; they have no idea of true humility. In the religious state all tends to make us know the true doctrine of Jesus Christ; such is the end of our meditations, our reading, and the instructions we receive. Obliged to admit that the Gospel precepts are better known, let us see now about the practice of them; is it not easier to pray, to meditate, to humble ourselves, to serve others, to practice poverty and chastity, than when we were in the world? Three or four hours perhaps we devoted to the service of God, whereas here our whole day belongs entirely to Him. Had we lived in the world the life that we pass here we should have been esteemed great saints. Let us thank God then for having chosen us from among so many others more deserving, that we might serve Him with more facility and love. It is so much easier for a Religious to be saved than lost."

To another very dear Sister who was inclined to look too much on the dark side of things she says: "The other day I was reading in St. Francis de Sales that a person of a melancholy turn of mind, of a cold and disagreeable disposition, might love God as much as another born with better inclinations; not with the same joy and satisfaction, yet with the same merit. Then I thought of my 'fagot of thorns,' and I prayed

our good God to make her love Him as much as she is capable of loving. I shall be heard if you are willing."

Writing to another who was sorely tried, she says: "It is true, my dear child, that our blessed Lord has very often tried the love of His servants by temptation and crosses before bestowing upon them His choicest favors; but they were very faithful to Him during those days of trial. Continue to be faithful yourself, my dear daughter, and then hope in your beloved and chaste Spouse, who loves you with an exceeding love. Despite your faults you may yet be a great saint; it is not presumption to have this confidence in Our Lord."

Another hears her say that she is glad to know that she suffers; and why? "Our Lord has permitted that you should not receive from the minister of God the consolation you expected from him. Now, my dear N——, you know that I love you, do you not? Well, I am glad at what you tell me you have suffered; yes, I rejoice heartily, for I see in those passing afflictions a mark of the love of preference which our blessed Lord has for my beloved child. You are entering the true way of serving your God, your dear Spouse, your Well-beloved, your All."

Urging some one to greater generosity in the service of God she says: "Continue, my dear child, continue to walk in the presence of God by doing all your actions solely to please Him, and by supporting courageously all the trials that it may please the divine Majesty to send you. Put yourself out of the reach of the evil one by keeping close to Jesus, our dearest Lord. Tell Him a hundred times a day that you love Him, that you are

happy to be His beloved spouse; tell Him that if you had a hundred souls, a hundred lives, they would all be employed to love and serve Him alone. If you fight manfully in union with God, if you put your confidence in Blessed Mary Immaculate, you will come out of your trials like gold which has been purified in the crucible. Call to mind the beautiful portion of the Lord's prayer—*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*—when you feel discouraged at seeing the little success you have with your classes, or when you think you do not inspire confidence; all this can be very meritorious for heaven if borne with love and resignation to the holy will of God."

Speaking of a failure in one of her undertakings, Mother Theodore concludes with her habitual expression of resignation: "The will of God be blessed. May His holy will be done forever! This is what we must come back to under all circumstances, and this is what we must start out with."

In reference to the subject of employments she says: "A good Religious never asks herself whether she likes this or that; she only says, 'My God, Thou wishest me to be employed at this; for Thee I do it; for Thee I love it; I apply myself to it in order to accomplish Thy holy will.'"

And again speaking of the divine will as the lodestar of consecrated hearts, she says: "Here I am about to contradict myself. Only a few days ago I told you, my dear Sister, that you would hear from me but rarely and lo! I already have begun to talk with you; but I shall say only a word: be very submissive to the will of God; endeavor not to have so many desires; but be

very pliable in God's hands, so as to will nothing but what He wills."

To a Sister who had difficulties in her missionary work she writes: "I have often told you, my dear child, that a change of place and employments is only a change of miseries; these exist everywhere, for our true country is not here below; we are in exile, let us never forget it. I am happy to know you can make your Communions; when we have our good God with us we are strong."

Mother Theodore's tender love for Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist manifests itself repeatedly. "Send your heart a thousand times a day, my dear daughters, to adore Our Lord really and truly present in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar," she would often say.

On the eve of Holy Thursday she speaks at length about the wonderful mystery, saying in part: "We are going to celebrate the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. This is not a simple representation of a past mystery; it is the continuation of a benefit still existing; it is Jesus in the midst of us under the appearance of bread and wine. O, my dear children, how consoling is this mystery of the Eucharist! There is nothing so delightful as to have a friend to whom we can at any hour confide our sorrows and our difficulties. Often our Superiors cannot receive us because they are engaged; but Jesus has time always; He is ever ready to hear us. You know, my Sisters, when we quitted our country and all that was dear to us, we found on this side of the ocean a Father, a Friend; we found waiting for us in a poor little log house our God, our All. It was with Him we consoled ourselves for all our privations, and since then He has never left us. He has been willing

to share with us all our miseries day and night. Yes, while we quietly take our repose, Jesus watches over us, He sleeps not; when we sleep He continues to exercise over us the same vigilance that He showed for His apostles, and which made so much impression on St. Peter that he could not see without weeping a little child near its mother. 'Jesus was like a mother to us,' said the Prince of the apostles to his disciple St. Clement; and I say to you, my dear Sisters, that Jesus for us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist is as tender and as vigilant as He was for His apostles. And He is not satisfied to be our guardian; He wishes further to be our victim; each day He offers Himself to the eternal Father to expiate our sins. . . . Do we sometimes think of our happiness in having the opportunity to assist every morning at the holy sacrifice of the Mass? What is our gratitude for a benefit that surpasses the intelligence of the angels?

"But this is not enough; no, it is not enough for Jesus to become our victim. He wishes to become our food. To speak worthily of this prodigy of love we should have the tongue of a seraph; and yet even an angel could not express the grandeur of this benefit. Jesus Christ becomes our nourishment! And further marvel—the nourishment does not change into ourselves but changes us into itself; and we become in some manner other Christs—we dwell in Him and He dwells in us."

As Mother Theodore's lively faith caused her to experience great devotion in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, she always encouraged the Sisters to warm themselves at the tabernacle fires; yet, as we have

said, she was decidedly practical. Remark the advice she gives to one of her daughters who regretted that exterior employments did not leave her long hours for prayer: "There is more than one kind of recollection. When we are occupied for God according to obedience, often recalling His presence, referring all to Him, we are sufficiently recollected, and we are certainly more agreeable to the divine Majesty when we are forming and teaching those poor little orphans than if, at our own choice, we were praying fervently all the day long on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament."

On the subject of recollection she says again: "It is not necessary that you should have a feeling sense of the divine presence during your occupations; make a fervent offering to God in the morning of all your thoughts, words, and actions; then renew it from time to time; for instance, when the clock strikes, at the REUNION, etc., and be assured that in preparing the sewing for the children you are doing the will of God, and, consequently, that you merit as much, nay even more, than if you were by choice in prayer before the altar from morning till night."

While Mother Theodore carefully avoided, and wished others to avoid, in their devotions whatever would interfere with the good order of the house, she was always happy to find the Sisters spending their leisure moments with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. When the feeble state of her health prevented her from active service, she herself would devote several consecutive hours to sweet communing with her God truly present in the holy tabernacle, and the time was never long enough for her fervor. When

she was better she arose an hour, and often two hours, before the Community to prolong her time for prayer; and she sometimes permitted others to do likewise. In letters to Sister Mary Liguori at Madison we see mention of this permission, and she adds: "Yes, Superiors stand in greater need of prayer; we must pray; it is our food, without which nourishment we perish."

If, as it sometimes happened, her Sisters on the missions complained that they did not hear from her as often as their hearts desired, she sought to console them with the assurance that they were all remembered in "prayer, our post, our telegraph, our surest means of communication," using her own words. She was always very busy, as they well knew; for besides the details of superintendence, frequent travels, illnesses, etc., her necessary correspondence consumed a large portion of her time. It is therefore not surprising that we find her unable to meet all the demands upon her pen. Even the novices must claim her attention sometimes, although they had a mistress. This was due to Sister St. Francis Xavier's frequent illnesses. Lest any one should be deprived of the counsel she needed, Mother Theodore would herself write. A novice who had some anxiety regarding the preparation for her vows, receives the following lines from her:

It is with you I begin to write this year, this year which will be for you so great, so remarkable, so happy, and which you will remember all your life; yes, and through eternity. How I wish it to be a *good* year for my beloved child! If God grant my prayer it will be so, do not doubt it. As to your vows, you have had so many instructions on the subject that you know very well both their obliga-

tions and their advantages. Nothing is wanting in this respect. If your heart is entirely disengaged from the things of this world, and purified from everything that would render it less worthy of the divine complacency, you must not be uneasy about the rest; all will be well in this important action.

Addressing the candidates whose term of noviceship was soon to expire, she exhorts them energetically: "Take great care in what you are going to do, you who desire to seal the contract with your divine Spouse by the sacred engagement of vows. Have you examined well into your motives? Is it to serve God more perfectly, to become more detached, more obedient, that you wish to assume these obligations? Is there mingled with your desire the hope of attaining to a more suitable position; to have a tranquil asylum wherein to pass your life, perhaps even the wish to be treated with more consideration? Oh! woe to you if such be your motives; yes, woe to you; for you would lose your soul by the very means which should insure its sanctification; your vows would become the cause of your reprobation. Reflect well, then, while you have time. Examine if truly you wish to become more submissive to your Superiors by the vow of obedience; more detached than you have been by the vow of poverty; more mortified by the vow of chastity; in fine, is it because you desire, after the example of our loving Saviour, to suffer, to be contradicted, humiliated, that you wish to take your vows? or rather is it to be more free, more independent? Consider and determine now, later it will be too late. One of your number is preparing herself to make her profession before you;

the angel of death covers her with his wings, and soon, very soon, she will hear the voice of the angel saying to her: *Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Go you out to meet Him.* This morning during my prayer I could not turn my thoughts away from my poor Josephine. If you could see how happy she is, how resigned to die! . . . but our loss is her gain."

Writing to an absent Sister she says: "Our poor dear Josephine is waiting for the heavenly Bridegroom sweetly and longingly. Oh! it is hard to see her go; but God's holy will be done. I must not speak our regret, she is so well prepared to meet her Judge, who is also her Spouse, for this hour she has consummated her nuptials with the Lamb. Yet I must own I am a little depressed this morning. Excuse me, my dear child, I always have to speak my mind to you."

Mother Theodore's apprehensions were very soon realized. In a few days she announced the demise of her dear daughter by a circular letter:

Our divine Lord has selected another flower from His garden at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. He has taken our dear Sister Josephine. Like another Joas, this privileged soul was sheltered under the wings of the Lord from her infancy; but happier than that ungrateful prince, she died in the house of the Lord before the wickedness of the world found its way to her heart; it never troubled the serenity of her beautiful mind, which never suspected evil in others.

We have the greatest confidence that she carried to her divine Spouse the spotless robe of her baptismal innocence embellished with all the virtues she practised during her too short life. Many of you have seen her as a loving

and dutiful child at home; as a pupil at school she was always a model. We have been in admiration of her virtues in the novitiate, but especially in our Academy, where her precious wisdom, her graceful dignity of manner and irreproachable conduct have ever deserved and obtained the respect and even the veneration of the boarders and of all the strangers who had any intercourse with her. But, like gold in the crucible, her precious qualities shone more brilliant in her long illness; her faith was immovable, her confidence in God unbounded, her love for her divine Spouse most ardent and strong.

It was an unspeakable happiness to be permitted to take her vows, and oh! with what fervor she sealed the pledge of her consecration. As for charity towards her neighbor, the virtue in which she excelled, it was more remarkable during those days of suffering when, with nature so reduced, it is very difficult to maintain an equable mind; she always had a pleasant smile and an amiable word for those who approached her; forgetful of self, she was occupied only with the sufferings of others. During the last week of her life she endured the most excruciating pains without the least complaint, saying only that she had the greatest desire to go to God. Her devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to her patron, St. Joseph, was touchingly tender. May our death be like unto hers!

Mother Theodore here takes occasion to give to the young Sisters the right idea of caring for their health. "We have the well-grounded hope," she adds, "that our dear Sister's death was precious in the eyes of the Lord and that she is, or very soon will be, enjoying the happiness of heaven. You envy her lot; but I should be very sorry, my dear Sisters, were you to indulge such a feeling; it would not be according to the spirit of our

vocation. My dear Josephine did not take care enough of her health; she acknowledged it herself when it was too late. This is the only cause of pain she ever gave me. You must not imitate her in that; health belongs to God. You should take a reasonable care of yourselves, avoiding solicitude, however, in order to preserve a life entirely devoted to God and to souls which He loves so much. After a long and painful career, you may not have her innocence but you will have procured more glory to God; you will have been instrumental in the salvation of a greater number of souls with whom you will praise, and enjoy your beloved Spouse during all eternity.

"Be faithful to offer for the repose of the soul of our dear Sister Josephine the prayers customary on the death of a novice, and let us take warning to have our souls in readiness that when the Bridegroom cometh we may go to meet Him with the same confidence and love."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE "FRUITS OF HER SPIRIT"—CONTINUED

Mother Theodore showed that she did not have much sympathy for those who failed in simplicity and remained silent when they should have disclosed their sufferings. "So, dear Sister, you would not have spoken of the pain in your side if you had not thought that some one else had told me of it. This is not right; it is not the proper disposition of a good daughter towards her mother. It is true, as you say, you do not complain without cause; but I am far from praising this conduct; you do not complain when you do suffer—how little humility there is in that! Do you expect my admiration for virtues of that stamp? They are counterfeit."

Uniformly mild and sympathetic, it was always a surprise when a sharp rebuke was heard from the holy Mother's lips; yet, as occasion required, the same pen that could show so much tenderness could be equally severe. What more suave than the following note:

Long ago I would have written to you had it been possible. I am sure you know it, for you know the heart of your Mother. To write requires time, but to love, to cherish, to pray for the happiness of our friends time is not needed. I may add that this kind of affection has

not been wanting to you. Very often on the way of my journeys I have prayed for you, my dear N——. I have asked Our Lord to have you in His holy keeping, and I hope I have been heard. Oh! if you could understand the feelings of a mother's heart for a child who is not her own by nature but by grace—I say the feelings of a heart for the temporal, but more especially for the eternal, happiness of her child—you would then understand what I feel for you.

In marked contrast comes this letter:

You deserve, my dear, that I should not write to you, having had the opportunity to see me and to speak to me; you did not avail yourself of it. I told you what I thought of you, and had you not been ailing then, I should not have stopped at that. I told you, and I repeat it again with sorrow, your conduct pains me deeply. If you could see as I do the consequences of this sort of behavior you would change very soon, I am confident. What! you to whom God has given so many unmerited graces; you who have been received among the pure and chaste spouses of Christ to thank Him for His gifts, His heavenly favors, you make no account of the vows you have made at the foot of the altar, vows which He has sealed with His precious blood! You violate them, I say, almost as soon as you have made them; you give free rein to your temper, and by the little respect you have for your Superior, the bad example you give to your companions, you act as if to indemnify yourself for the restraint you had imposed upon yourself during your novitiate and by which your Superiors were deceived. Unhappy child, do you think you have deceived the One who reads the bottom of hearts, who will one day wreak a terrible vengeance for His graces thus profaned? What will become of you under the

avenging hand of God, which your infidelity calls down upon yourself? What will you answer? Has He given you the charge of watching, condemning, and reproving others? What a fatal blindness! If you do not repent, tremble for your salvation. I doubt not but that the illness God sent you was a warning in His infinite mercy for your soul. Oh, unfortunate if you do not profit by it! . . .

One thing seems very strange to me; you say not a word of what I said to you at V——; you appear to make no account of it. If you have forgotten what it cost me so much to tell you, oh, pray do not write to me any more! I have nothing more to do for you but to pray Our Lord to have pity on a heart so hard and a mind so blind.

To the same Sister a letter is addressed a month later:

Jesus, Mary, Joseph! I am pleased to learn from your letter, my dear child, that you are better, and I thank God for it with all my heart. May you learn from this illness all the lessons that God intended to teach you; above all, may you profit by them.

It pleases me to know that you have read my letter and meditated upon it; meditate upon it still more; make serious reflections on your future; your inconstancy causes me to fear much for you. When will you be firm and always yourself—reasonable? But you are exactly like the cock on a steeple, ready to turn with every wind. However, I hope God's grace will triumph finally and that you will become a glorious conquest of His love. It is time, my dear child; see how the years are flying; and then—eternity. Are we ready to appear before God?

I thank you for your fond New Year's wishes; you do well in praying for me. Ask particularly that I may have

the grace of a good and happy death. Believe me in Our Lord. . . .

The effect of these severe words becomes apparent in another letter from Mother Theodore:

I was more pleased with your last letter than those preceding it. *Mon Dieu!* how happy I should be to see you some day what you should be! You have taken the means, by opening your heart. This was all that was wanting; in this way you will cut short all the follies with which your imagination is filled, and which do you so much harm. Certainly, my poor daughter, you have many reasons for being confounded before God; but, after all, there is always time to do well; the mercies of the Lord are greater than our iniquities. God can pardon us more sins than we can commit, for our malice is finite and the mercy of the Lord is infinite.

The peace that we may feel in this world does not consist in not being tempted, but in keeping one's heart firm and united to the will of God. As soon as we perceive that we have offended our dearest Lord, let us humble ourselves in the sight of the divine Majesty, ask His pardon, and go on our way as before in peace. We are never hypocrites when we do not intend to be, hence you must not exaggerate anything; you are bad enough without making yourself worse than you are.

Adieu, my dear daughter; I wish you a good and holy year, a good and holy life, and what follows as a consequence, a *happy eternity.*

The letters from which the above have been selected are twenty-five in number, all containing rather sharp corrections; notwithstanding, pansies are pressed here and there between the leaves, and the cherished packet

is labelled "Letters from my beloved Mother Theodore."

Although there was an austere frankness in Mother Theodore's intercourse with the Sisters, there was also a warm-heartedness, a maternal tenderness that gained all hearts. She reckoned accurately and tempered her chidings to the strength of character she discovered in her subjects. Their self-love was pinched without ceremony, and without any fear apparently that it would not be turned to profit.

For instance, to one she said: "Do not fear that you will lose your mind, like poor M. C——; he had a fine intellect and good judgment; you have nothing of that sort; we cannot lose what we do not possess."

To another: "Simplicity—there is but one explanation. To be simple is not to be *double;* you are *double* when you think you are in need of something and do not make your needs known, as you have just now failed to do. Will this suffice for this time?"

Truly, the grace of God is with His saints [1] since they can speak plain truths that will not be unacceptable.

These acidulous portions were always followed eventually by something a little more soothing, words of gentleness and encouragement, even of praise when the least deserved; but in this respect Mother Theodore was chary of her words, and sometimes concluded by apologizing for not having more regard for their humility than to praise them, since she knew they sought only God's approval.

When speaking of the chief end for which the Con-

[1] Wisdom iv. 15.

gregation was instituted—the instruction of youth—she often repeated this forcible statement: "A Sister of Providence cannot go to heaven alone; if she is not surrounded by the souls she had brought to the knowledge and love of God, she will not find the way herself to the celestial abode. God in calling us to the religious life wished not only our own sanctification but He called us to work with Him for the salvation of our brethren; thus only shall we sanctify ourselves. Oh, the beautiful vocation that is ours! Have you sometimes thought, dear Sisters, that you are called to do on earth what Our Lord did? He instructed and you instruct. He was often surrounded by little children, and you spend your life among them. I should wish to give you a high idea of this vow that we make; it is truly sublime to be devoted to the service of our neighbor, to co-operate so intimately with our blessed Lord in the work for which He laid down His life. But we must not think it is an easy task. There are few persons who comprehend how difficult it is, because almost everybody imagines that it is an easy thing to rear children. We must possess all the virtues in order to be able to teach them to others. *The way of precept is long, that of example is short;* therefore we should work courageously at our own advancement in perfection, knowing that 'the more we love God the more unction there will be in our instructions and advices.'"

Mother Theodore's disinterestedness appears in a remark she added to the foregoing: "All that we teach the children must be done for the glory of God and the good of the children; the profit that the Community derives from it is a secondary consideration. Believe

me, my dear daughters, there will always be money enough at St. Mary's if there are good Religious there. Oh, let us ever pray for this, work for it, and the balance will come; yet, I consider it a good quality in a subject to feel a pleasure in being able to contribute to the temporal well-being of the Congregation; those who feel nothing, says St. Francis de Sales, are good for nothing."

Mother Theodore's doctrines of prayer were imbibed in her youth from the good Carmelites, who always continued to be her most cherished friends. St. Teresa was her patron in baptism and the spirit of Carmel was that on which she wished to mould the interior life of the Sisters of Providence. She never aspired, nor did she expect any of her children ever to aspire, to the sublime gifts that were bestowed on the Seraph of Carmel. The raptures of the saints are their least merit; but what she admired and imitated and held up as a model for all to copy was the habitual spirit of recollection and prayer, the "common-sense" piety of St. Teresa. Eminently practical herself, her views were forcibly expressed when treating of prayer as well as all other religious practices, and her methodical habits were likewise apparent. She warned repeatedly against losing time in prayer by aimless musing and dreaming. "Is it reasonable to spend one's thought and time without promise of fruition? It is simply waste of energy, consuming much and producing nothing. That devotion is not solid which flits about from thought to thought like the bee sipping honey from flowers, because that is not according to the law of our nature; the bee sips and then works; we sip and then dissipate.

and empty-handed as well as empty-hearted we appear.

"We have no gift to offer to the Lord; in fact we can hardly find Him, we have wandered so far away from the centre of our souls where He awaits us. There is no substantial sweetness in this soul vagrancy; then, by the law of contrast, bitterness arises, weariness and disgust, the legitimate product of our unpractical devotion."

It was after hearing Mother Theodore's annual exhortation on this subject that the scholarly and deeply spiritual Father Gleizal, S.J., who was giving he retreat exercises, said: "I have heard another St. Teresa." He was in the sacristy saying his Office when Mother Theodore began to address her Community assembled in the adjoining room. She was not aware of his presence there, and the good Father, expecting to be edified, remained for a considerable time listening with rapt attention. When relating the incident to another Community, he added: "I assure you I felt very little, indeed, in appearing before those Sisters to speak to them when they had such a Mother to instruct them."

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[1]Rev. Father John L. Gleizal, born in France, January, 1809; entered the Society of Jesus at St. Louis, Mo., November 20, 1837; died at St. Louis University, August 6, 1859.

He was an impressive, earnest, eloquent preacher and converted many to the faith. He was a man of deep piety, and especially successful in conducting spiritual exercises to religious Communities. From 1849 to 1857 he occupied the position of master of novices. His devout and holy life gave him the confidence of the people, who regarded him as a saint.—Walter H. Hill, S.J.

Another subject which Mother Theodore mentions is the celebration in honor of her patron saint. On December 27th, the eve of her feast, she writes to one of her *American* Sisters: "According to the very Christian custom in Brittany of wishing you a Happy New Year, etc., I wish you a good and holy year, my dear child, and the grace to profit by all the little pains that fall to your lot from time to time, so that at the end you may obtain paradise. All send love and good wishes, especially Sister Olympiade; she is too busy about St. Theodore's feast to write to you to-day. They are going to feast me, poor Sisters! They do not know that for me it is like a funeral."

Yet Mother Theodore would not deprive her dear children of the joy and satisfaction it gave them to commemorate her patronal day in the manner their devoted hearts suggested. As an instance of these happy festal days, we will make use of Sister Maurice's pen to give us the details of the last St. Theodore feast their Mother spent upon earth. Writing to a Sister at Highland (Vincennes) she says:

Yesterday's feast reminded me strongly of the promise I made you last August. I am delighted to-day to give you all the good news about our dear Mother and her feast. Everybody pronounces it the finest "Mother's Feast" we ever had. Oh, how much we wished you were all at home to see and hear our beloved Mother! If there was any grief mixed with our unbounded joy it was that our mission Sisters were not with us. When you left Mother she was, it seemed, on the point of death, unable to express what her loving heart felt at being obliged to send you off so far from home. No consoling words could she then give you that other years solaced the pain of

departure, for she had no voice; but now our good heavenly Father has given her back her voice, and again we have those beautiful instructions, those kind and encouraging words at recreation that always rejoice us, and in her own natural voice.

Last evening, as I was seated near her, I told her that I would tell you that her voice was as good as when she used to take us out to burn stumps. "O no, my child, not quite; but St. Ann has done much for me," she said.

All the little details of decoration and programme are described by enthusiastic Sister Maurice, and unwittingly she reveals her own generosity in adding:

Recreation was given on the feast at dinner, which was served in the same large room, and the Sisters tell me everything was a grand success. I had to miss it, being with the children; but I felt just as happy as if I had been there.

Mother Theodore, finding a blank space on this letter, fills it, saying:

My dear N——, I thank you for your good wishes. You already have mine and you know they are as hearty as your own. May we all be saints! We shall be if we make good use of the time that remains to us to gain heaven. Perhaps it is very short for some among us, but it will be long enough if it causes us to merit a happy eternity.

The thought of the eternal recompense seemed to dominate in Mother Theodore's mind, not from a mercenary spirit that makes love of gain the spring of the world's activity, but love of the object gained, from whom her soul would never more be separated; hence it was that the feasts of the saints always excited her special devotion. "May we all be saints!" was her

constant ejaculation; "we must be saints, for *this is the will of God: your sanctification.*"

A triple feast—the Circumcision, the Holy Name, and the New Year—was the occasion on which she presented the following reflections: "We are about to begin a new year. How many have seen the first of this which is now closing and have not seen the last. Our good Bishop Bazin was full of life and zeal at its commencement and now he is in eternity. O did we but understand how short time is! What remains to us of our past years? Have we kept any of them? They have passed and all has passed with them—our joys, our pleasures, and our satisfactions, as well as our sufferings and our pains. Tell me now, dear daughters, do you not feel more joy in the recollection of your efforts and your trials in the service of God than in the remembrance of passions indulged? There have been in our midst two who have died the death of the just, two exemplary lives have been closed by a truly holy death. They were young and strong; nevertheless they have been chosen as the first victims. You cannot trust, therefore, in your strength nor in your youth. Perhaps the strongest among you will be the first to be called away. When the summons comes, how pleased we all shall be to have suffered something for God! Commence the new year, then, with courage. Offer to our divine Lord all your little difficulties and pains; I say little, for you well know you have nothing great to suffer; some disobliging words, a slight want of attention, a reproach, deserved perhaps, a little fever or sick-headache, this is about all, generally, that we have in the way of suffering. But howsoever slight our trials

may be they can merit for us the kingdom of heaven; for what He asks of us is only the heart. To-morrow, then, we shall offer all our actions to God in union with the sufferings and merits of the infant Jesus shedding His precious blood, offering it to His eternal Father for us and receiving the name of Jesus. How well that name becomes Him! He has been truly Our Saviour. Oh! let us love that sweet Saviour of our souls; if we offer to Him all the love of our hearts with the little afflictions that He may send us, ours will be a good and happy year."

Mother Theodore endeavored to express the same sentiments to her mission Sisters, who keenly felt their absence from her, especially on feast-days. These occasions often brought to them a circular letter which bridged over the distance that separated them and imparted new vigor to their souls; but when illness prevented her writing at length, they had to be satisfied with a few words expressive of her good wishes for their temporal and spiritual welfare. To one she writes: "May the year which we have just begun be a happy one for all! It will be if we remember that we are pledged to the service of our sweet Lord Jesus, our Spouse, our Love."

The Feast of All Saints excited in her a very special devotion. On the vigil of this solemnity, in burning words she bids the Sisters raise their hearts to heaven and entreat the saints to obtain for them a place in their blessed society. "To-morrow the Church celebrates the feast of not only one saint but of all the saints. When we consider the joy of the inhabitants of heaven we envy their happiness; but does it not

depend on ourselves to share it with them to make the feast of to-morrow our own feast?

"When we reflect on the felicity of the saints, in what do we find it to consist? In loving a God infinitely amiable; in delighting in Him; in being eternally united to Him; in seeing Him always; in delighting in Him by being able to admire His perfections, to comprehend the love He has for us, to bless His mercy, His wisdom, His sweet providence over us in particular. With what gratitude we will behold the hand that directed the events of our life! How we will admire the care of God not only for us but for all His children! And the completion of our joy is the thought that it will never end. Oh, eternity, eternity! O could we comprehend the happiness of that first instant when the soul enters into the joy of heaven, that instant when it can say 'I am saved!' What a precious assurance! It is the sum of all our desires, of all our hopes.

"To-day we are ignorant of whether we are worthy of love or hatred; and even were it revealed to us that we are in the state of grace, who can assure us that we shall be so to-morrow! How painful is this state of anxiety! In heaven there will be no more fear, no more sorrow, no more tears, neither absence nor death. The saints realize what their little sacrifices have gained for them, a realization that is overwhelming; so much for so little. It seems to them that heaven has been given away, and it is true; it has been given to them for very little; for what is a brief time of humiliation compared to an eternity of joy?

"We wish to partake in the glory of the blessed. What is it that God asks of us that we may hear Him

say: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from all eternity?'

"What have we to do to become saints? Nothing extraordinary, nothing more than we do every day; only to do it all purely for His love, uniting our actions, however insignificant they may be, to those of our divine Lord, our prayers to His prayers, our work to His work, our repasts and repose to His refreshment and rest.

"This practice of union will advance us rapidly in the path of sanctity. What sorrow and what confusion for us, if we have the misfortune to be lost, seeing it is so easy to be saved! For—note well what I am going to say—if there be any among us who will be lost it will be by the very same actions that will save others. We all dwell in the same house, rise and retire at the same hour, pray and recreate at the same time, receive the same instructions, and participate in the same sacraments; whence comes it, then, that some advance each day in perfection and some seem to recede? Is it not because some are united with God and do everything for His love, while others work for themselves, through necessity or ill humor? I supplicate you all to resolve to-day to become saints, great saints. Beseech the thousands and thousands of God's elect to obtain for you the graces you need to keep your resolution. They are pleased to be invoked, for like us they have been feeble, they have been tempted, they have had the same kind of miseries. The sins of some may have been greater than any of ours, but God has pardoned them and to-day they sing His mercies. Turn, then, your thoughts, your hearts to heaven. We may not all be here to celebrate together another All Saints'

day. Already some of our little band have left this our place of exile, and soon, perhaps very soon, it will be our turn. Shall we be like the foolish virgins who were not provided with oil for their lamps when the heavenly Bridegroom knocked? Oh, no; let us work with courage while we may."

Each recurring festival brought its own reflections; it would serve unto edification to produce them all, but our limits bid us close with but one more extract:

"To-morrow the Church celebrates the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord. How dear this day should be to us, for it reminds us that our Master, Our Saviour, has ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us. The apostles on the mountain remained immovable, their eyes turned toward the sky. Two angels came to command them to leave this sublime contemplation, assuring them that Jesus would come again in the same manner that He had left them. My dear daughters, I will not say to you, Why do you look up to heaven? but I will ask, Why do you still look down upon the earth? Oh, raise your eyes on high! There is your hope, there is your treasure. Raise your eyes when assailed by temptation; raise your eyes when overwhelmed by sorrow; when worn out with fatigue and weariness, raise your eyes to this place of rest. What though the road be rough, the conflict painful? It will not be long. Courage! Only a few days, perhaps a few months, at most a few years, and we shall have ceased to combat; we shall have entered into the kingdom, into the possession of that place which our good Jesus has prepared for those who have left all to follow Him—a place near Jesus and Mary. What blessed company for all eternity!"

## CHAPTER XXXII.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY DECLARED AN ARTICLE OF FAITH.—DEATH OF BISHOP BOUVIER IN THE QUIRINAL PALACE, ROME.—PIUS IX. VISITS THE DYING BISHOP.—MOTHER THEODORE RECEIVES THE TIDINGS FROM ABBÉ SÉBAUX.

Love's refining process had not yet completed its work in the soul of Mother Theodore; there still remained some shreds of human comfort and satisfaction that must be yielded to the fires of purification, some attachments of heart that must be severed before the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom.

The first of these painful sacrifices was the death of Bishop Bouvier, whose name was linked with every joy and sorrow known at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods since its foundation.

Mother Theodore's last letter to the venerated Bishop bears the date

November 25, 1854.

We have learned through the *Univers* that you also, my good Father, have been ill. Fearing that it might not be possible for you to accept the highly honorable invitation of the Sovereign Pontiff, we have prayed much that our dear Lord would restore you to health. With great pleasure we now learn that you had set out for the Eternal City, where you must be at present, and where you

will take part in declaring the glorious Mother of God to be immaculate. We unite our prayers with those of the Church to beg the assistance of the Holy Ghost for the august assembly of which you are a member.

Undoubtedly, my Father, you pray for us in Rome, at the tombs of the martyrs, those heroes of the faith who were so happy as to shed their blood and to give their lives for their God. Above all, beg the Prince of the Apostles to cover us with his protection in this infidel country, where men no longer believe in the divine mission nor the divine personality of the Son of God. Ask the Holy Father's blessing for us, I beseech your Lordship. How happy would we be could you obtain also from his Holiness the approbation of our Rules. They are so full of wisdom, so well adapted to the wants of a Congregation like ours. . . .

We are increasing, notwithstanding the storms that the enemies of holy Church raise up against us. At this date we are seventy-two Sisters wearing the religious dress, not including Sister Mary Theodore, who is now on her way from Ruillé-sur-Loir. Mother Mary has had the great kindness to send her to us; she is travelling under the care of Bishop Martin.

Sixteen postulants remained after the retreat, which was given by Father Gleizal, S.J., master of novices, at the house in St. Louis. He found our Community having an excellent spirit (which is my greatest consolation); this he said publicly. He was edified especially by our union, and he gave it as his opinion that there is not another Community in the country where they love one another more than at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

The fact is there does exist among our Sisters great charity and perfect obedience. All the good that is done is owing to the wisdom of the Rules which you have given

us, and which would make great saints of us did we perfectly observe them all. . . .

When this letter reaches you, you will have finished your long journey and received the felicitations and good wishes of your children, happy to see you again in their midst. Receive also the congratulations of your daughters in the "Woods," and be assured that no one in the world offers them with more truth and cordiality. Deign to give us for our New Year's gift your paternal blessing; bestow a special one upon her who is the most needy—your Lordship's humble servant, etc.

On the 14th of January we find this item in Mother Theodore's diary: "Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.—Our Rev. Father announces in the church that the conception of the Blessed Virgin, pure and immaculate, has been declared an article of faith by the Sovereign Pontiff in the presence of more than two hundred bishops. O MARY, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN, PRAY FOR US WHO HAVE RECOURSE TO THEE! O Mother without spot, protect thy house in the Woods! We assembled the Community at our return to chant the *Te Deum* in the chapel; it will be sung again this evening at Vespers and Benediction, the chapel in its best."

How soon was the joy-note in the woodlands to be changed to a wail of grief and lamentation! Truly had Mother Theodore said that by the time her letter would reach its destination the devoted and beloved Bishop would have finished a long journey. It was the journey from earth to heaven. Her diary note of February 6th tells us:

"We have just learned the death of our good and most venerated Father, Mgr. Bouvier, Bishop of Mans.

He was the founder, we may say, of our house in Indiana. In the days of trial to our rising Congregation, he was our support and our benefactor; in a word, he has been a father to us. He died at Rome after the promulgation of the decree proclaiming the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, which he had so much at heart. Oh! earth had no more attractions for him; he had seen enough. 'It is good to die here,' he said, after hearing the successor of St. Peter announce that Mary was conceived without sin.

"The Sovereign Pontiff visited him—how beautiful and how Christian was his death! O my Father, you have given us a *rendezvous* in heaven; obtain that I may be there one day with you. My God, I beseech Thee, place among the angels and saints him who followed such a goodly number of saints who, like himself, were Bishops of Mans."

Details of the Bishop's last days upon earth, and of his holy death, were given by Abbé Sébaux, later Bishop of Angoulême, secretary to the Bishop of Mans.

The full particulars are admirably set forth by Madame Corbinière (Clementine Le Fer de la Motte) in her book entitled *L'Indiana*, to which she joins the notice of L'Abbé Chevereau, Vicar General of the diocese of Mans, describing the Bishop's last moments. In testimony of the esteem in which the aged prelate's holiness and learning were held at the Papal Court, the Holy Father wished to entertain him in his own palace. A suite of rooms, seven in number, were prepared for him on the ground floor in the Quirinal, in consideration of the difficulty he experienced in ascending the stairs.

The Bishop arrived at Rome sinking under the

fatigue of his journey and the illness he had sustained on the way; but after tender care and rest he was able to be taken to the Council the following day, when the decree proclaiming the august Queen of Heaven to be immaculate in her conception was promulgated. The weak and aged Bishop's joy was intense; now he could sing his *Nunc Dimittis*. His fever increased under the fatigue and excitement of the first session of the Council, and he was compelled to return to his bed, from which he never rose again. As the end drew near, the Holy Father, setting aside court etiquette, deigned to pay him a visit. Pius IX. greeted him with the benevolence that characterized his Holiness. The Bishop, joining his hands, with tears in his eyes, his face lit up with joy, exclaimed, "Unde mihi tanta gratia?" The Holy Father replied in French: "You place yourself in the hands of God?" "Oh, yes, Holy Father, and in yours," he answered; "non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat." Pius IX. remained twenty-five minutes alone with the dying Bishop. What passed between the prelate detained for a moment on the brink of eternity and the common Father of the faithful who came to receive his last confidence we know not; God only knows. But how touching and how worthy of heaven were those reciprocal outpourings which so moved the heart of Pius IX. that when returning from his interview bathed in tears he exclaimed: "Oh, how good is this dear sick one!"

The supreme moment arrived for the Bishop of Mans December 29, 1854, on a Friday, and at the hour that Our Lord Jesus Christ laid down His life for the redemption of the world. In hearing the details of his last

moments from Bishop Bouvier's secretary, Abbé Sébaux, whose recital was frequently interrupted by his tears, the Holy Father spoke these words of consolation: "Do not weep; he died the death of the saints; he is in heaven."

As soon as the sad tidings reached St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, the grief-stricken foundress sent the following circular letter to the various establishments:

St. Mary's, Ind., February, 1855.

J. M. J.

We are the children of the saints, said Tobias. We also, my dear Sisters, are the children of the saints. Our beloved Bishop Bouvier has gone to a better world, braving, like a Christian hero, dangers, sickness, death itself to obey the call of the Vicar of Christ upon earth, and of the Blessed Virgin. He died in the Eternal City after having heard from the lips of the successor of St. Peter the decree of our blessed Mother's Immaculate Conception. His heart was full of gratitude and consolation; but his happiness was a celestial joy—the world had nothing now worthy of his great soul. "It is good to die here," he said. Yes, it was good for you, dear Bishop, to pass from the arms of the Holy Father, the admirable Pius IX., into those of your God, that God whom you had so faithfully served during your long life.

O, let us try to imitate his faith, my dear Sisters; his rectitude of mind, his zeal for the glory of God, his forgetfulness of self; in fine, all his heroic virtues. Our Congregation is indebted to him for its Rules and Constitutions; St. Mary's owes to him its very existence and preservation. This saintly and learned prelate was in our days of darkness what the luminous cloud was for the Israelites in the desert, a shelter and a light. In our days of peace he was ever a father to us. Five weeks before setting out upon his great journey he sent us his portrait and expressed

regret at not being able to come himself to his "beloved daughters of the Woods."

We have the well-grounded hope that he is in heaven, increasing the long list of saints who before him have rendered the Church of Mans illustrious. Still, where is the traveller who has trod this dusty earth for eighty years without tarnishing the purity of his baptismal robe? You will, therefore, offer for him the prayers prescribed by our holy Rules.

To the Rev. Abbé Sébaux Mother Theodore writes at length, giving expression to her sorrow, as profound as it was filial, to which she adds:

You have had both the affliction and the consolation of receiving the last sigh of our good Father. Permit his daughters, while mingling their tears with yours, to congratulate you on being the one chosen among so many devoted priests to accompany him on that journey which proved to be the last. Our hearts were relieved when we heard that you were near him during his last moments. Your filial devotedness must have been consoling to him when he found himself upon the point of death, I was going to say in a strange land. But no, Rome was not a strange land to him; on the contrary, it was beautiful to see this faithful son of the illustrious Pius IX. pass from the arms of this great Pontiff to those of the Almighty whom he had served so long and so fervently. We thank God for having inspired you to have his remains conveyed to his beloved diocese; there will now be another protector for the city, which is renowned for the great number of holy prelates that have preceded Bishop Bouvier in the See of Mans. . . .

We are the only ones who possess nothing to remind those who will come after us of what we owe to this vene-

rated father; and who owes as much as we do? His generous heart never experienced the forgetfulness which distance often causes.

His portrait has not arrived; we feel its loss very keenly. If you could have another copied for us we should be very grateful. We would willingly impose upon ourselves the greatest sacrifices to procure that treasure for the Community.

Abbé Sébaux having graciously acceded to this request for souvenirs, receives Mother Theodore's acknowledgments:

Only yesterday [she writes] the excellent *envoi*, which we owe to your kindness, arrived. I cannot express the various emotions which filled our hearts when we opened the precious package, dearer to us than all the gold of California; however, I can assure you, dear Rev. Father, that gratitude to the sender was not the least among these sentiments. I felt an ardent desire of being more perfect in order to have more power with God for obtaining whatever may render you happy in time and in eternity; but, alas! in my utter unworthiness, my profound misery, what can I do? Your name has been inscribed on the register of benefactors immediately after that of our venerated Bishop Bouvier, whose loss we are still lamenting. And as the Community will never forget him, to whom, after God, it owes everything, neither will it ever forget you; and long after you will have passed away from earth, prayers will be offered for you at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods.

A general communion was made here this morning for all our benefactors; mine was for you in particular. Your generosity and the choice made with the delicacy of a father for his children make it evident that our beloved departed Bishop trained you well in his own school; that having loved you as his son, he bequeathed his spirit and his

heart to you. The good Bishop! From heaven he will protect you and us also; it seems to me he does so already. When passing before his portrait I feel the veneration one has for a saint; and, though praying for the repose of his soul, I also invoke him with the greatest confidence. From these lines you will see, good Abbé, that at last we have the consolation of possessing his portrait, which remained so long at New York without being injured in the least. The alb, which would be dear to us even were it not half so handsome, will be used on the four great feasts of the year and at the close of the retreat. The ten photographs will be distributed among our ten establishments, where they will remind the Sisters that they are the children of the saints; but the medallion (containing the hair) will remain here at the Mother House.

The next letter that Mother Theodore addressed to Mans conveys to the successor of the lamented Bishop Bouvier congratulations from St.-Mary-of-the-Woods:

To the illustrious and most worthy Bishop of Mans, John Baptist Nanquette:

Since the painful loss that we have sustained in the person of your predecessor, we have not ceased to implore Heaven not to leave the Church of Mans long in her widowhood. To-day we learn that our prayer is granted. The news of your consecration has come even to our forests, consoling our hearts; and, united with our Sisters of Ruillé, we have entreated the Lord to pour upon you His most abundant blessings and to communicate to your Lordship His most excellent gifts, that you may carry with courage and success the noble burden that has been imposed upon you. We ask especially that after a life full of days your name may be added to that long list of holy bishops who in the See of Mans have shed so great

lustre on the Church. Your clergy, your large Communities, and your people fain would see you long as the shepherd of the flock, that thereby may be healed the heart's deep wound caused by the death of the distinguished Bishop Bouvier, eminent alike in holiness and in learning.

The frequent mention of Bishop Bouvier's learning is due to the fact that, besides the erudition he displayed in the pulpit and at the synods and councils which he attended in capacity of theologian before his elevation to the episcopacy, as well as during the twenty years of his administration, he engaged in writing dogmatic treatises, among which was a manual of theology that was used in his diocesan seminary, and in various other ecclesiastical institutions in France, Spain, Germany, and Italy. His pen was always at work during the hours intervening between the duties his office imposed. So sedulous was he that he seemed, like St. Alphonsus Liguori who was one of his chief patrons, to have made a vow never to waste a moment. By his constant assiduity he was enabled to make many and valuable contributions to sacred literature without detriment to the zeal he owed to his flock. He never failed to visit every portion of his diocese regularly; he attended the examinations of theological students at the Seminary in the episcopal city, performed the exercises of the annual retreats with his clergy, frequently visited the various religious Communities established in his diocese, presided at all the principal Church solemnities, and devoted many hours every week to the work of the confessional. Moreover, he was a popular preacher and, even in his advanced age, was much sought after. His amiable disposition

made it difficult for him to refuse any request. So his journeys were frequent, and when at home his house was open to the poor or distressed at all hours. Never was any one known to leave without an audience, and yet the dear bishop seemed never to be busy. In gentle composure, in patient sweetness, in watchfulness of spare moments, his numerous tasks were completed, and he left to his diocese a rich legacy of virtuous example no less than of profound scholarship.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

MOTHER THEODORE'S FAILING HEALTH.—HER PRESERVATION FROM DROWNING.—LETTERS TO AND FROM FATHER GLEIZAL, S.J.—DEATH OF SISTER ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.—PROMISCUOUS CORRESPONDENCE.

FREQUENT allusions have been made during the course of this narrative to Mother Theodore's poor health. She was never well, yet she always took the greatest part of the burden upon herself, no matter what the nature of the work might be. Her indefatigable labors and her ever-increasing austerities began to tell severely on her health, and the autumn months of 1855 considerably augmented the unfavorable symptoms that had recently caused great uneasiness among the Sisters. In their filial solicitude they besought prayers from among their numerous friends, particularly from those whose privilege it was to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass. In answer to one of these appeals Sister M. Joseph received the following note from Father Gleizal, S.J., master of novices at St. Stanislaus Novitiate, near St. Louis, Mo.:

Say to your very worthy Mother Theodore that in gratitude for the prayers she engaged you all to offer for me during my retreat, the first Saturday of every month, (or if there is an obligation preventing it on that day, then the following day,) I will offer the holy sacrifice to ask

from the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that of which I spoke in my last letter, and of which I shall again say a word in a few days. . . . Moreover, every day I will make an intention in my Mass that your estimable Mother may be restored to health. The Community, nay the Church can ill afford to lose persons like her. But in all, my dear child, we must be resigned to God's holy will.

Writing to Sister St. Francis Xavier the same Rev. Father says:

Poor Mother Theodore, how is she now? I do not know if I am deceived, but it seems to me that our dear Lord will leave her with you yet some time. If I were in Father Corbe's place I would forbid her doing the least kind of work. I would consider before God what is above her strength and put a *veto* upon it. During my little sojourn at St. Mary's I remarked that others could do many things that she took upon herself to do; for example, to say the public prayers, write the letters, except a few requiring her personal attention, etc. Be sure that a diminution of work of this kind would do her much good, and she would thus have more time to consecrate to prayer and union with God, which she would greatly enjoy. Have the kindness to say all this both to Father Corbe and to Mother Theodore. She must, in her old age, become a child again by her obedience, her simplicity, her indifference to all things except the will of God, and His good pleasure.

I thank you and Mother Theodore for initiating the dear child whom I have sent you, into the practices of the religious life. I truly loved my dear Mary Elizabeth when God gave her to me by baptism; but I love her much more since she has crossed the threshold of the religious life.

Allow me, dear Sister, to speak to you, heart to heart, on a point of the religious life which is the summary of perfection. It seems to me after my little experience, that the great reason why religious souls remain all their lives worldly souls, even with the religious habit, is because from their entrance into religion they did not form a true idea of the religious life, at least, not in practice, if they did in theory. They left the world with the idea that in religion they would be more happy, having less to suffer, and finding comforts which they did not enjoy in the world; so that flight from suffering, humiliation, and privations is what conducted them to the house of God. Having entered, they hear of the cross, of suffering, humiliation, contempt, mortification as the portion of the true spouses of Jesus Christ; but these are for them only mysterious terms which they do not understand, or expressions to which they attach quite another meaning. It seems to me then of the utmost importance to try to remedy an evil which is so great. Make your novices meditate well on these three words: Poverty, Contempt, Suffering. A novice entering the novitiate goes there to become one day the spouse of Jesus Christ; but the bride on the wedding day shares in the fortune of her spouse. What are the goods, the portion of Our Lord? POVERTY, CONTEMPT, SUFFERING. What would be thought of one who would wish to have everything in abundance, while her spouse has nothing? What would be thought of her if, while her spouse is despised she seeks to be esteemed, praised, flattered? No; never will a religious be a true spouse of Jesus Christ if she do not first renounce everything for His love. I say everything—her will, her judgment, her natural inclinations, her relations, her friends, pleasures of the world and, above all, herself.

Second, if she do not prefer contempt to esteem, if she will not suffer patiently, willingly, joyously, the corrections,

warnings, humiliations, slights she may receive, giving herself generously to whatever is lowest and humiliating in the house;

Third, if she do not esteem sufferings of body or mind, whether they come from God or the devil, whether from without or within, from superiors, from equals or inferiors, whether merited or undeserved: yes, if your novices comprehend well these three words—POVERTY, CONTEMPT, SUFFERING; if with the eyes of faith they see in these things what the world cannot see, they possess the means of becoming great saints. And if they try to love prayer, even though it be full of weariness, distractions, aridity, disgust; if they persevere in it courageously, they will certainly become in the hands of God instruments perfectly adapted to do great things for His glory. Let them not say that this is flying too high for novices. I think you understand me. I do not say that novices should be formed in such a way that they should be perfect during their probation; I only say that all your efforts should tend to make them despoil themselves of all that is contrary to these three great pillars of perfection—POVERTY, CONTEMPT, SUFFERING.

I only wished to have a little chat with you, as they say in English, and lo! I have written a long sermon. Assure your worthy Mother Superior of my unfailing interest in her edifying Community, and take good care of her health, of which I hope soon to hear better news.

All yours in Our Lord,

J. L. GLEIZAL, S.J.

In September of 1855 Mother Theodore opened an establishment at Lanesville, Ind. Returning she took passage on an Ohio River boat, intending to stop at Madison. As they approached the town and she per-

ceived that they were going to pass by, her distress was apparent; but the kind-hearted captain who was under orders not to stop at Madison, offered to have her rowed to the shore in a skiff. What then happened, her own words will tell us:

In descending to a canoe Sister Basilide and I both fell into the river, the boat being pushed off too soon by a man leaping into it. Sister was rescued immediately, but I was hanging for some time in the water sustained by my left hand only, which caught on to the edge of the skiff. My strength was fast failing, but the angels came to my assistance. May God be blessed!

Sister Basilide remained at Madison. Mother Theodore returned alone to St. Mary's and said nothing of the accident. A pupil arriving at the Academy several weeks after this incident brought the report to Sister M. Cecilia. When Mother Theodore was questioned concerning it, she said, "It is true; but I cannot speak of it. Do not make me think of anything so frightful as that was; only thank God Who sent His angels to save me." Her reticence in regard to it caused the Sisters to think that the holy angels were her visible protectors, though possibly visible to her alone. The following summer when Sister Basilide returned to St. Mary's for the annual retreat, she confirmed their surmises and added other details that showed how favored our Servant of God had been by the heavenly spirits.

The fright and the exposure told severely on Mother Theodore's health. She became very ill, erysipelas having set in. As usual her spiritual daughters had recourse to the heavenly Physician with all the ardor of their souls,

and, as usual, the reward of their faith, confidence and charity was the venerated Mother's partial recovery.

The report having been circulated that she had been cured in a supernatural manner, she gives a true statement of her case in response to a letter from Sister Gabriella, which contained expressions of great delight because of the alleged miracle.

ST.-MARY-OF-THE-WOODS, Oct. 5, 1855.

DEAR SISTER:

I write only a few lines to tell you that your truly filial and affectionate letter has given me abundant and deep joy; for I do not doubt the sincerity of the sentiments you express any more than you mistrust my interest in your regard. But, my poor child, you are in error if you think that I am cured. Far from it. The One who has kept me alive until this day can continue to do so if He chooses. He will not take me away until he wishes to use the poor instrument no longer; another will be much more useful in His hands. Do not fear for our dear Congregation; Our Lord loves it too much to abandon it.

To the same Sister she writes again:

It is a pleasure to be able to satisfy your desire of receiving some lines from me, though they may be the last, for my health is far from being good. I look better, but all my "better" is to feel a little stronger. I am very grateful to Our Lord for this slight improvement, for I can go to Mass, and after that I am more encouraged to carry the cross that Our Lord has sent me in His mercy. Had He taken me at once I believe I would not have loved Him so much; or, at least, I would not have appreciated enough the happiness of suffering for Him who has suffered so much for us. I do not think that I yet prize

sufficiently this inestimable favor; but I may say that I value it more than I did before. I would not change my cross for any consolation that our divine Lord might give me instead, though I do not deny that it is painful to be in the state in which I am at present. Excuse me, dear Sister, I have spoken too much of myself. Continue to pray for your old Mother, and offer some mortifications and other good works for her particular necessities.

Hemorrhages made it evident that the accident above-mentioned caused rapid development of a pulmonary affection against which nature could not long resist. The holy foundress herself felt that the end was approaching; but the Sisters, accustomed to witness the marvels of divine power in respect to her health, were not very apprehensive this time, particularly in the beginning. They relied, too, on Sister St. Francis' influence at the heavenly court; they even went so far as to say that Sister St. Francis would die first, for she would never let Mother Theodore die; and so it happened. When all natural hope had been abandoned Sister St. Francis would prostrate herself before the Blessed Sacrament and remain motionless for an hour or longer; then, returning to the bedside of the invalid her expression of perfect calm inspired the beholders with confidence, and the least reassuring word from her was accepted with unquestioning faith.

The process of purification had been going on from day to day in the soul of Mother Theodore, her whole life being an exemplification of the principle that, in the moral order, as in the physical, suffering is the law of growth. Her soul advanced according to the various gradations of sufferings that were meted out to her—

bodily infirmities always, the sundering of family ties, of attachment to her native land, the surrendering of convent comforts at home, to find instead, a strange country, an unknown language, coldness, poverty, hardships, persecutions.

The next test of love was to reach to her heart's very core. It was to take from it the support it had ever found in the blessedness of true friendship. In an earlier chapter we spoke of the union of hearts that existed between Mother Theodore and Sister St. Francis Xavier. Time served only to strengthen the bond that in their love of God caused their souls to beat in unison. It was the meeting of saint with saint, in whom affection was purer, attachment more sincere, and feeling keener, because of its being centered in the divine Lover, the Spouse of their souls. No one predicted for Sister St. Francis Xavier more than a year or two of missionary life; yet God had spared her to the holy foundress upwards of fifteen years. The hour of separation came on January 31, 1856. Mother Theodore informs the members of the Congregation at the various establishments by a circular letter:

You will share the deep sorrow in which we are plunged at St. Mary's when you read this letter, announcing the immense loss we have just sustained by the departure of our dear Sister St. Francis Xavier, whom Our Lord has called to Himself. She departed towards two o'clock in the afternoon of January 31st, after eight days of severe nervous convulsions, which from the beginning left us very little hope. You do not expect me, my dear daughters, to write a eulogy of her whom we have so many reasons to regret; of her whose absence leaves such a

void in the Community. Her name alone suffices to bring to mind all that is sweetest, purest, and most attractive in virtue. She was for those who knew her the ideal of religious perfection. Not only have we unanimously considered her the saint of our congregation, but persons of the world, even those of a different faith, could not behold her angelic exterior without being led to the thought of God. Her death was the echo of her life; or rather it was the bursting forth of a volcano of love. The divine fire with which her soul burned sent forth only sparks during her life; but when the near prospect of heaven had taken away that reserve which caused this humble soul to hide its treasure; or rather, when her heart was no longer able to contain its ardent love, a torrent of burning aspirations escaped from her lips with such vehemence that it would seem enough to break the feeble bonds which united her soul to her body. In calling upon Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, her voice was so full of love and her countenance so heavenly that she appeared to belong no more to earth; she was already in heaven. I understood that this fruit of the garden of the Spouse had reached full maturity and that He wished to gather it in. I saw that I must immolate my Isaac, and consent to be separated from her who, firm as a rock, had always supported me in my trials; from her who, notwithstanding the immense distance which separated us (for she was a saint) had almost blended her existence with mine. I made the sacrifice of her, O my God, without a moment's hesitation; for who am I to resist Thee? But Thou knowest that the deep wound it has made in my heart will be healed only when I shall be reunited to her in that heaven which she beheld so beautiful in dying.

We shall all have the happiness of rejoining her, my dear Sisters, if we are faithful to follow her example; if

we fulfil perfectly our holy obligations which are the same as hers were. We are devoted to the same Spouse, we expect the same recompense; let the remembrance of our cherished Sister St. Francis encourage us in the combat. As for her, so for us; the day of triumph will arrive very soon.

Although we have the sweet hope that our dear Sister is in heaven, we will nevertheless conform to the spirit of Holy Church and to our Constitutions; therefore, do not fail to fulfil punctually for our departed one what is prescribed by our Rules for the deceased Sisters.

You will also recite for nine days the *Veni Creator* and the *Ave Maris Stella* to beg the light and grace which we need in order to make the necessary changes under these sad circumstances.

In a letter addressed to a godchild of Sister St. Francis this passage occurs:

Some days before Sister was taken sick, I asked her if she prayed for our dear Martha.[1] "O yes, Mother," she said, "I pray for her every day without fail." Our dear departed one is not lost to us, Martha; she will now pray for you in a more efficacious manner; and she will obtain for you the grace to break the ties which hold you attached to earth. O my cherished child, endeavor to break them before death comes to do it without profit. It will cost you to leave all; it had also cost Sister St. Francis Xavier; but her love for Jesus made her believe that what she had sacrificed was nothing compared to what she had received. Our Lord will not abandon us in our need. He will send another, a soul which He knows of in the t easures of His ineffable love. In the meantime, Sister M. Cecilia will come to Providence to be in charge of the postulants.

[1] Sister Mary Esther Brett; died a member of the Community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, June 25, 1878.

To Father Gleizal, whose continued interest and repeated spiritual assistance had caused him to be regarded as one of the Community's most devoted friends, Mother Theodore writes, her letter being dated

St. Mary's, Feb. 4, 1856.

It costs a great deal, my venerated Father, to say *Thy will be done, my God.* Yes, it costs one to lose a subject like Sister St. Francis Xavier. You can realize it, for you knew that heart all on fire with love of God. You knew with what zeal she labored to form Jesus in the hearts of others. . . . During the fifteen years of her life at St. Mary's, we saw her walk with a firm step in the constant practice of religion, without ever relaxing or showing those vicissitudes of good and bad days so common among persons of our own age. She was always a fervent Religious, and I dare say it to you, Father, the most perfect I have ever known. We were always obliged to hold her back with the curb of obedience, which virtue she practised most perfectly.

Having repeated the details given in the circular letter above quoted, and many more in confidence concerning the raptures with which Our Lord favored that holy Religious, Mother Theodore closes by begging excuse for her lengthy recital and adding:

I felt the need of pouring out my heart into yours and of asking your prayers for a Community in desolation. Intercede for us, I entreat your paternity, and ask our merciful God to send us another Sister St. Francis Xavier.

Mother Theodore encloses a note to Madame Le Fer de la Motte with Sister Mary Joseph's letter bearing all the details of her saintly Sister's last days upon earth:

I can hardly believe she is gone. I am, as it were, under

the influence of a distressing dream. We all experience the same feeling. When I saw the end was coming I made my sacrifice to God. I thought it would cost me my life; but though my heart remains firm on the altar of sacrifice I feel that it is broken. The effect caused by her holy death is wonderful. I should like to send you some of the letters we have received during the last three weeks. . . .

Father Corbe also wrote to the bereaved family, saying in part:

We had for a long time contended with Heaven for her by our prayers. But, alas! too soon, according to our human views, has the divine Spouse taken to Himself the one whom He cherished and enriched with so many graces. Her spirit, however, remains with us, and continues to animate the companions whom she has left. Her memory will live long at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. I myself shall never forget her; I speak to her and seem to hear her answers; thus I pass my days, in an illusion, no doubt, but in an illusion productive of good. It recalls her in a lively manner to my mind, and the remembrance always excites to virtue, to the love of God, and the desire of heaven.

Sister Eudoxie, mistress of novices at Ruillé-sur-Loir, learning of the death of Sister St. Francis Xavier, who, we may remember, made her novitiate under that excellent mistress, wrote the following to Irma's mother:

I received with holy respect the blessed veil of my good Sister St. Francis Xavier. I regard it as a relic. I have always present to my mind the many subjects of edification she afforded us while among us, and I love to repeat them to my novices to animate them to fervor and love of duty. Never since I am mistress have I come across

a soul so strong, so generous, and, I may add, so privileged. I know she does not forget in heaven the interest I bore her and that she will aid me in the fulfilment of a duty of which she herself knows the difficulties.

The trial that the death of Sister St. Francis was to the heart of her Mother Superior cannot be overstated. Intense in its love, it was equally keen to affliction; but Mother Theodore always kept it under control. In life or in death, no excess of feeling ever manifested itself. Mother Cecilia's Memoirs record that when the weeping Sisters went into the room, Sister St. Francis having just expired, Mother Theodore, who fell out to the head of the couch, roused herself from her silent grief and, assuming a firm tone, said: "My dear Sisters, since we have a sacrifice to make, let us make it generously and not yield to immoderate sorrow." Then in the strength of strength which virtue gives, and with perfect composure she gave orders concerning the last duties to be rendered to the remains.

The Sisters in the various houses shared deeply in the common sorrow. Their letters gave repeated proofs of their deep realization of the painful loss, but more of their profound sympathy, so filial and so unselfish, for their bereaved Mother.

In one of these tender messages Mother Theodore replies:

"We are not so sad as St. Mary's as you imagine: indeed we regret our dear Sister but we are confident she is in heaven, and we too are going thither."

Writing to another she says:

"Yes, our beloved one surely Sister St. Francis has

gone to heaven—to heaven where she lived even while on earth; for she found it on our holy altar with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, her delight, her happiness, her all. Oh, how happy she is now in possessing her God without fear of losing Him! She was so happy to serve Him here upon earth. Would that it were given all of us to find the same happiness in the house of God! But why should we not? We have the same obligations, the same advantages, and we await the same end."

The Sisters now began to fear that Mother Theodore would soon follow her cherished daughter to the grave. One of them giving expression to her fears receives this answer: "Do not be uneasy about the future, my dear child. He whom you have chosen for your dear and Beloved One dies not, and if He found a mother for you when you lost your own, He will find another when that one will be taken away. 'Ah, my God,' said your dear mistress, 'I thank you for not having given me to any one but yourself, my chaste Spouse.'

"When I saw what progress the disease was making I made my sacrifice, the greatest offering I could make to God. If you were as well prepared I could see you die also with the same comfort, and say for you, as for her, the prayers for the agonizing and the *De Profundis*."

From these testimonials of Mother Theodore's tender affection and courageous soul we turn to behold again her humility, esteeming herself so far beneath her departed daughter. It is revealed in a note to her very dear friend, Father Benoit, at Fort Wayne:

What she said to me, and I entrust it to you as a secret, is that I would soon follow her. Oh, if I could really fol-

low her! But, no; never shall I have her virtues, never shall I love as she loved. Ask the grace for me to do penance and support the loss of my cherished daughter joyfully and lovingly, so as to be less unworthy of her.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

MOTHER THEODORE'S LAST ILLNESS.—HER TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS.—HER DEATH.—TRIBUTES TO HER MEMORY.

MOTHER THEODORE'S words all disclosed the fact that her childhood's wonder-thought had become the absorbing reflection of her ebbing life. ETERNITY! ETERNITY! was constantly on her lips. It seemed impossible to divert her from the consideration of that beatitude upon which all her desires were concentrated, and which Sister St. Francis had assured her would soon become her possession. "ETERNITY! ETERNITY! how happy we shall all be in heaven, in beholding the sacrifices that have won for us such bliss! Soon, ah! soon, may it be our blessed portion!" These were the last lines she dictated to her dear mission Sisters.

The paschal candle was burning low, the hymns of the ritual were losing their jubilant tone. With the passing of Easter gladness the light that had guided the little Community at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods for upwards of sixteen years was to be removed; for it was in the order of God's providence that the flame which burned with an ever-increasing brightness in the soul of Mother Theodore during her fifty-eight years of mortal life, should soon be fed by the joys of the beatific vision, the inheritance of the Lord, wherein is found rest.

The example of her edifying and apostolic life is to be perfected by manifestations of yet greater sanctity during the long illness which preceded her demise. For several months her many infirmities had not permitted her to leave the house; but she continued at her post, attending to everything until Monday in Passion Week, the 17th of March, on which day she wrote in her diary: "I am obliged to take to my bed. What a beautiful week to be upon the cross! O good cross, I will love thee with all my heart." These were the last words her pen traced.

Each day found her growing weaker, yet she was the only one who believed her end was near. Four times since her arrival in Indiana she had been prepared for death and had recovered; the Sisters again expected that the last sacraments and the prayers of the Church would have the same effect. Their faith and confidence even led them to anticipate a miraculous intervention similar to that she experienced when, being attacked by cholera at Vincennes, she was cured immediately upon reciting a MEMORARE in obedience to Father Corbe's command; or again, when by mistake she had taken a deadly dose of arsenic; and further still, when struggling with the waters in the middle of the Ohio River, God's angels came to her rescue. These things they remembered well, and their simple trust in divine Providence blinded them for a while to the change that was going on in their beloved Mother. At last, becoming conscious of her dangerous symptoms, great distress prevailed, more especially because, as one of them said, "Sister St. Francis is gone; who will keep Mother alive now?"

A letter from one of their old friends, the Rev. J. B. Chassé, who became chaplain at St. Mary's after the death of Father Corbe, shows that the Sisters were not alone in their apprehensions. On the 2d of April he writes from Vincennes:

Good Sister Joachim has been so kind as to give me news regularly from St. Mary's. The first was quite consoling, but I am much afflicted by the last. I have shared in your late anxieties, always hoping, though, that it was only a moment of trial. I cannot bring myself to think that almighty God will take away this good Mother so soon. I trust St. Joseph united his intercessions yesterday with yours to obtain what we so earnestly ask. I offered the holy Mass for the same intention, and all your beloved Sisters received Holy Communion to the same end. Let us hope and put all our confidence in God. I do not say anything in particular for your good Mother—you know how much I desire the happiness of each one of you—I only say that I do not ascend to the holy altar a single day without praying in particular for her and for you all.

Mother Theodore, we have said, was of a naturally cheerful disposition. It manifested itself in all places, at all times, and under all circumstances. She always showed remarkable self-possession and her countenance revealed habitually the interior calm and happiness she enjoyed even in her greatest trials. The sentiment of praise that was habitual to her bore as its fruit this holy joy, a virtue which gives so much freedom of spirit, so much courage and hope. She was always praising God for His goodness, always finding new mercies for which to bless Him; in the words of her patron, the

seraphic Teresa of Jesus, she could not satisfy herself in giving thanks to God.

Her affability and genial manner impressed all who approached her and imparted to them something of the charm, the happiness, the gratitude, and the love that filled her own soul. As an instance of her grateful spirit her diary may be quoted. October 22, 1855, noting that it is the anniversary of the Community's arrival in Indiana, she says: "Fifteen years ago to-day! How many graces, how many blessings! Praise to the good God!"

Pains of body and soul, individual and common distresses, crosses of every shape and hue, dropped out of her enumeration; or, better, found themselves included under "graces" and "blessings."

Sickness made no change in her sentiments unless to deepen her trust, her humility, and her love. Her allusions were always to the favors God had bestowed upon the Community, and never a conversation closed without a reflection calculated to show that hers was a heart habituated to reverence, to adore, praise, and exalt the sweet providence of God.

But the ways of God are impenetrable. A new phase of purification presented itself. In the *Memoirs* which Mother M. Cecilia left us we read:

"The holy Mother, who had been remarkable all her life for her joyous spirit, now became grave and silent; she seemed to have lost all relish for earthly joys; her thoughts were drawn to another world. In this abstraction she often spent several consecutive hours absorbed in the thought of that eternity which she was ever contemplating in spirit. Those of our number who

knew her best and noticed this change most, felt convinced that the sufferer received accessions of grace which revealed to her soul new conceptions of heaven, whose bright attractions threw into shade all that is fair on earth, and nothing of this world could any longer have charm for her. It is related by one of the Sisters who slept in the room with her, to be called if needed, that she was awakened by a bright light in the room; she saw it was something extraordinary and, seized with fear, called aloud to know what the brilliant light meant. Mother Theodore, answering softly, bade her be quiet, and enjoined silence upon her respecting the occurrence. The Sister then understood that it was a mysterious visitation. We never learned more than what the Sister saw, for the privileged one would never speak of it; yet her countenance showed there were supernatural favors vouchsafed her at frequent intervals.

"Mother Theodore was the only one to feel that she was in her last sickness; as for us we would not give that thought entrance to our minds; consequently we put no questions nor asked advice concerning what should be done after her death. There was not, it is true, anything to be troubled about with regard to temporal matters; accounts were all straight, all affairs clear, and only a small debt on the new building remained to be paid. Mother herself then collected all she wished to say, which consisted of certain recommendations and advices on religious subjects."

The writer of the *Memoirs* seems to have overlooked the fact that the dying Foundress confided to Sister Mary Joseph many points of information incorporated

in this volume. Perhaps she was not aware of it, or she may have referred to the matter and included it in the phrase, "Certain recommendations and advices."

It was not in her last illness only that Mother Theodore was supernaturally favored. Others have affirmed that sometimes when she remained in her office after the Sisters had retired at night to do some urgent writing and they were waiting for her in an adjoining room, as they would never leave her downstairs alone at a late hour, they were witnesses of the angel visits she there enjoyed. Sometimes it was by the torrent of surprise and delight which her words expressed that they were aware of the heavenly visitation; again it was the sudden illumination of the room that attracted their attention. They never could tell accurately how long these favors lasted, for they themselves were too much under the spell of the mysterious; but the remembrance never dimmed, and they felt privileged in being witnesses of these wonders.

Though it has been said that Mother Theodore became very serious, there was nothing of sullenness in her silence; it gave the impression only of a deep union with God. Every one that went to inquire about her, or to render her some service, was greeted with her usual maternal smile. Every attention offered her was noted, though the attendants endeavored most carefully to disguise their affectionate promptings, and she would say: "I am offering your little acts to Our Lord; it is for Him you do everything, I know." Love knows no burden, says the *Imitation;* so the Sisters never wearied in their care. Still, what they could not realize she perceived and would often send them

away to rest and refresh themselves. Then she would say, as if consolingly: "You would have nothing to suffer if you did not have me. Courage! A little longer, it will soon be over." She was appreciative of the least services and repeatedly assured her dear nurses that she could never repay their kindness, but that God would. "I have learned what gratitude is," said one whose privilege it was to spend much time in the sick-room; "but it has taken a very precious death to teach me the lesson."

The complication of diseases with which the Servant of God was afflicted caused her very acute sufferings. Her looks alone declared the fact, as it was always most distasteful to her to speak of her sufferings. She tried to prevent the kind inquiries of her visitors by forestalling them in questioning and entering upon other topics of conversation; but if her ingenuity could not escape the ordeal, she answered simply and spoke very lightly of "these bodily ills that deserve so little attention." If her visitors were those to whom she could speak familiarly, after they had drawn from her the avowal of her painful state, she exacted from them a *Te Deum*, a *Magnificat*, a *Benedicite*, or the like, to thank God that she suffered.

Sometimes the infirmarian would remonstrate with her when, after a very painful night, she would have herself helped to the chapel in the morning; but Mother Theodore's reply was: "My poor daughter, how could I ever bear what I have to go through if I did not get grace from the Holy Sacrifice?" The Holy Communion was her life-giving food; the days on which she expected to receive her divine Saviour were pre-

ceded by hours of special preparation, intense longing, and loving anticipations. A smile and a word, a brief "to-morrow," told her thought. But how often as a final purification that greatest of comforts was denied! For many days at a time she could retain nothing on her stomach; amorous regret then escaped from her afflicted soul in sighs and pitiful pleadings. Like many of the saints, like the Son of God Himself, the Lamb without spot, her divine Spouse, who began *to fear, to be heavy, and to grow sorrowful and be sad*, she, too, must suffer the pangs of dereliction; her burning tender colloquies must change to heartrending plaints. When the grieving Community saw her altered looks and heard her cry of grief, *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?* their hearts were wrung with sorrow; they entreated the good bishop and others of their ecclesiastical friends to offer the Holy Sacrifice, which request was most willingly granted, all being in deep sympathy with the Foundress, whom they considered a saint, and with her afflicted Community.

Four days before her death the last sacraments were administered; the peace of her soul then returned, and that beautiful serenity habitual to her before again lit up her features. This happy change made the Sisters hopeful for a moment of her recovery. Vain hope! She grew weaker from hour to hour, and on the night of May 13th she entered upon her agony. About midnight Father Corbe said the prayers for the agonizing and pronounced the last absolution; at four o'clock in the morning he returned to repeat the prayers. "During the entire night," the *Memoirs* relate, "the sufferer said nothing; she was so united to God that she appeared

to have no disposition to speak; still, a few minutes before her last breath she opened her eyes and made an effort to say something; but the power of speech was gone. Her agony was easy; there was no restlessness nor any change of feature; her breathing only became heavier and less frequent, and she grew pale as life ebbed away. Then came a little sigh and—her spirit was gone." The hour of her departure was 4.30 A.M., May 14, 1856.

When Father Chassé visited Mother Theodore during her last illness, she asked him to return to sing her Requiem Mass, as Father Corbe, she knew, would feel her death too much to be able to sing. It was as she expected. Father Corbe was deeply affected; but he was present beside the Bishop in the sanctuary. The funeral oration was delivered by Rt. Rev. Bishop St. Palais, whose emotion was evident. Rather than a highly wrought panegyric it was an effusion of tenderness and personal reverence for the one whose great and limpid soul he had known so intimately. His own tears blended with the grief of the Community, and he promised that now, as they had lost their Mother, more than ever would he be their Father.

All accompanied the remains to their last resting-place near the Chapel of St. Ann, where four of their number had already been laid to rest. Some years later, seeing that the spot chosen would eventually be too small, the remains of all buried there were transferred to the present cemetery, in the centre of which is the grave of the venerated Foundress.

To the present day visits are made to her tomb, not only to pray *for* her, but *to* her, a confidence that origi-

nated at the moment of the holy Mother's death. So great was the faith in her power of intercession that favors both temporal and spiritual were sought and obtained through her mediation by members of the Congregation, and by pupils and others who had known her, not excepting some ecclesiastics. How many times she had aided young priests who confided to her their difficulties and begged her advice! How many times, too, had she been called upon to establish peace in families by effecting a reconciliation between husband and wife, by bringing the one or the other to the practice of religious duties, or by removing the causes of discord and alienation! Her death revealed many such secrets. Innumerable tributes of gratitude were offered by those poor people to the memory of their departed friend, whom they did not hesitate to call a saint. Her letters were treasured highly, and many petitions were made for souvenirs from articles she had used or had had in her possession. These mementoes however, were scarce, her spirit of poverty leaving very little to dispose of; so this request was one the Community could not grant.

The record of graces obtained by her daughters and attributed to her power is a sealed book; but tradition of the sainted Mother's holiness has borne to succeeding years unbroken faith and confidence in her power with God; she is invoked particularly by those having difficulty in governing children, and by all to acquire the spirit of their holy vocation. The old and the young equally lay their petitions at her feet.

It devolved upon Mother Mary Cecilia, then assistant, to inform the Sisters of the various houses of the

loss they had sustained in the death of the venerable Foundress. Her letter embraced the details above given, to which was added:

Our cherished and saintly Mother now reposes in the sweet sleep of her holy death. . . . We need not fear to apply the word "sainted" to her, for her life was formed on the life of Him whom she had chosen to be her model. . . . Her example is our most precious legacy; may it dwell forever in our remembrance to invite and urge us to the like perfection. May we continue as we did under the guidance of our excellent Mother, with a fixed intention of accomplishing the will of God, of being ever resigned to His holy dispensations. Thus shall we follow the path she traced out for each one of us; thus shall we follow her to that region of everlasting bliss where, in union with her, we shall offer the homage of ecstatic love to our bountiful God, to our merciful Saviour, and to Mary, our lovely and gracious queen. With this prospect before us, even in our tears we are happy. We saw this hope in the sweet countenance of our Mother as she lay in death; she smiled upon us with a celestial look which seemed to say: I will watch over you, that where I am you also may be.

Sister Mary Joseph hastened to inform her family of the Community's great loss; it was doubly afflicting to Elvire, Madame Corbinière [her sister] tells us; for she had transferred to Mother Theodore all the affection she once gave to her sister Irma [Sister St. Francis Xavier].

"It was not grief that caused the death of our cherished Mother," Sister Mary Joseph wrote. "No, no; her soul was too great, too generous, not to sacrifice to

God her dearest daughter. The grace of God has more power than nature has weakness. Mother said to me with astonishment: 'I, with a heart that palpitates with the least contrariety, did not feel it throb at all at the death of my dear Sister St. Francis Xavier.'"

The Very Rev. Edward Sorin, founder of Notre Dame University, who in writing to Mother Theodore always signed himself her brother, wrote to Sister Mary Joseph:

I wish I could go and pray for awhile at the tombs of the saintly religious whose memories I treasure up as a priceless portion of my richest souvenirs. I mean your own angelic Sister and your noble foundress in America. I trust you never question for a moment my admiration of both, and the intense pleasure with which I read your rehearsal of their rare and exquisite virtues.

The columns of the *Univers*, through Messrs. Veuillot and Aubineau, presented a most pathetic obituary, together with an extended account of the work of Mother Theodore as foundress of the Sisters of Providence at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods. This article appeared later in book form under the title, "Les Serviteurs de Dieu," published by Leon Aubineau, a life-long friend of the Community.

Abbé Sébaux, later Bishop of Angoulême, having been apprised of Mother Theodore's death, addressed Sister M. Joseph the following lines:

Most Honored Sister:

I cannot tell you with what painful surprise I learned through your letter the death of the most excellent Mother

Theodore. Nothing caused me to foresee it, and I knew how useful she was to you, and how cherished at the same time. As for myself, I felt towards her a sort of veneration. It is, then, from the depths of my heart that I join in your regrets, that I share in your sorrow, that I unite myself to you in prayer. This worthy Mother has fulfilled in America a very difficult mission, in which her health must have experienced rude shocks; happily her labors have been blessed by God. She has had the consolation of seeing her work admirably consolidated and developed, with full prospects for the future of religion. And if divine Providence now breaks the instrument—too soon, alas! our hearts repeat—it is because the career of this worthy and excellent Mother has been long enough, rich enough in merits, the reward of which is heaven. From that beautiful abode where to-day she enjoys repose and happiness, she will not cease, my dear Sister, to protect this edifying religious family to which she was so devoted; she will pray for you all, for the work, for its future, for the perfecting of the religious spirit in all of you. You called her your Mother; she has borne away this name to heaven, and you will love to give it to her there; she will always bear it. And then, too, the time will come when the pious family which is broken up by death here below will be reunited at the feet of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin.

I thank you very much, dear Sister, for the edifying details you have given me. I was deeply touched by the thought you had of using at the funeral the alb of our holy and lamented Bishop Bouvier. The "souvenir" parcel has not yet reached me; it will be doubly precious, and I await with anticipations the time to notify you of its reception. Please accept, my very honored Sister, and beg your Sisters to accept the expression of my deepest

sympathy, and the assurance of my very sincere devotedness in Our Lord,

L. SÉBAUX, Curé de Notre Dame.

Laval, July 14, 1856.

In the meantime letters from friends nearer home came filled with sentiments of regret, veneration, and love. They are too numerous to quote them; we must be content with expressing fondest appreciation of all the touching and beautiful tributes paid to the memory of the sainted foundress, closing with the

LETTER OF FATHER CORBE TO MADAME LE FER DE LA MOTTE,

written after the retreat of August, 1856:

For nearly sixteen years God has made us pass through many tribulations, though these blows seemed only to fall around us; this time His strokes have penetrated to the heart's very core. The death of our dear Sister St. Francis was but the beginning of the sacrifice God had resolved to ask from us. But He has not struck us in His wrath, for the two victims he has chosen were more capable of opening the treasures of His mercy. But, considered from a human point of view, our loss is irreparable. Oh! how great was the grief of all our Sisters on the 14th of May, when I entered the death-chamber about four o'clock in the morning and found them all on their knees, crushed, as it were, by the stroke which had bowed them down. They turned towards me as if for consolation. Alas! I had none to give them. Were they not doubly orphans? Ever since I had known Mother Theodore and your Irma I had seen them always zealous, yet always ingenious to smooth over the difficulties of the religious life for their spiritual daughters; the one, the good Supe-

rior, removing the thorns and briars on the way, fearing not to be wounded herself so as to spare them sufferings; the other, culling gayly the smallest flowers which budded in this path, often a little rough, and showing their charms to the novices. Both, though different in disposition, worked for the same end; both, too, to a certain extent, had the same sufferings; they desired them, and their delight was, as they said, to be on the cross with their beloved Saviour; and this good Saviour consoled them both with such extraordinary delights as may be called foretastes of heaven.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the death of these holy Religious; their faces were luminous. One would have said they had fallen into a sweet and peaceful slumber while caressed by rays divine. Such is the privilege of the elect.

The evening of a good life touches the aurora of heaven. Those whom we now regret so deeply are not lost to the Community. They pray for St.-Mary-of-the-Woods, and it is, doubtless, to their intercession that we owe the choice made at the elections, the good dispositions of the Sisters, and the excellent spirit among them.

It has been a cherished task to "write this as a memorial in a book." Much remains unsaid; but there is enough, it is hoped, to cause us, in the words of the Martyr Prophet, to *remember the tender mercies of the Lord, the praise of the Lord for all the things that He hath bestowed upon us, and for the multitude of the good things which He hath given according to His kindness and according to the multitude of His mercies.*[1]

To every Sister of Providence, spiritual daughter of

[1] Isaias lxiii. 7.

Mother Theodore, be it said, *Look and make it according to the pattern,*[1] that with the holy and venerated foundress all may eventually

> "reach that court
> Where love no compulsion needs, but follows free
> The eternal Providence."

St.-Mary-of-the-Woods—this was Mother Theodore's life-work. To bring into being and consolidate an institution destined to become one of the great shrines of religion and education in the New World was the mission assigned by divine Providence to this sweet and modest, humble and diffident Religious of Ruillé-sur-Loir. All the preparation of her youthful years, the trials of her early religious life, her later difficulties in the new foundation, her struggles for the preservation of the Constitutions and Rules, her labors, her prayers, her sufferings, her life, her death, all were directed to this one object by the unerring hand of Him *who governs all with number, weight, and measure,* and who confounds the mighty and great ones of the earth by choosing the weak and lowly to accomplish His designs.

That Mother Theodore builded better than she knew is shown by the prosperity of the institution and its marvellous expansion. In less than half a century after her death the Congregation's membership has reached eight hundred. Sixty academies and parochial schools, two orphanages and one industrial school, scattered throughout the States of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Massachusetts, and Maryland,

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[1] Exod. xxv. 40.

with twenty thousand children, are in charge of the Sisters of Providence; while the buildings at St.-Mary-of-the-Woods—the beautiful white stone church of the Immaculate Conception, the grand Academy, the Mother House, the Novitiate, the chaplain's residence, the Woodland Hotel, etc.—form a striking contrast to the primitive log or frame structures that preceded them. In glancing back upon the history of this institution, the spirit of the holy foundress is visible throughout. Everything bids us *Come and behold the works of the Lord, what wonders He hath wrought.*[1]

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[1] Ps. xlv. 9.

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